THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

THE COMPLETE CONSPIRACY

VOLUME ONE

O beautiful
For spacious skies
For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plains
[redacted]
[redacted]shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good
With brotherhood
From sea
To shining sea

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VOLUME ONE

WRITER: >>>>>> JAMES TYNION IV

ARTIST: >>>>>> MARTIN SIMMONDS

LETTERER: >>>>>> ADITYA BIDIKAR

DESIGNER: >>>>>> DYLAN TODD

EDITOR: >>>>>> STEVE FOXE

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH
CREATED BY JAMES TYNION IV
& MARTIN SIMMONDS

ISSUE 6: >>>>>>
ART BY ELSA CHARRETIER
COLORS BY MATT HOLLINGSWORTH

ISSUE 7: >>>>>>
ART BY TYLER BOSS
COLORS BY ROMAN TITOV

ISSUE 14: >>>>>>
ART BY JOHN J. PEARSON

ISSUE 15: >>>>>>
ART BY DAVID ROMERO

ISSUE 16: >>>>>>
ART BY ALISON SAMPSON
COLORS BY JORDIE BELLAIRE

ISSUE 17: >>>>>>
ART BY JORGE FORNES
COLORS BY JORDIE BELLAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

THE COMPLETE CONSPIRACY • VOLUME 1

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THERE IS A STRANGE SENSE OF FICTION TO LIVING INSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. ESPECIALLY THESE DAYS.

It's important to remember that that's what we are. A fiction. The American flag isn't carved into the bedrock of this country; it's carved into our minds. America isn't America because our ancestors' ancestors' ancestors lived here, too. The people whose ancestors did will be quick to remind you of that, and right to do it. But here we stand. The richest and most powerful nation on the planet telling a story about ourselves to each other and to the world, and doing our best to believe it.

At our heart, we've always been fabulists. We were founded by religious extremists looking for God in the wilderness and by the con men looking to make a few bucks off of the rubes settling here. We've spent centuries telling incredible half-truths to each other about what this land meant, and what it could mean. And those myths are what made the country into what it is. At our finest moments, these myths have made us great, and at our lowest, they have made us zealous, uncaring, and capable of unspeakable harm.

At present, the fabric of the shared vision of my country is more tattered than it has ever been in my lifetime. There are few shared beliefs on which we can agree, whether about ourselves or each other. We've traded a loosely shared collective myth for equally unlikely stories, lured in by clean answers about who is responsible for the shortcomings of our lives. Those stories are so seductive that we scarcely take the time to consider who is profiting off their spread and the resulting discord.

We live in a time where dangerous fictions proliferate faster than they ever have, sped along by ill-considered algorithms designed to make us use them more, not to make us better. Craven businessmen buy and shred any journalistic entity that dares challenge their hegemony. Government either fails to act on our needs or actively resists doing so. It's a time of instability, and those times have always enabled conspiracies about who is doing it and why. The reality is never as satisfying as the far-flung stories. It's never as clean or as deliberate. Which is why, in times of turmoil, conspiracy spreads faster than any truth.

And let's be honest: there's always a bit of a thrill in a good conspiracy theory. An element of one-upmanship and folklore best shared over a beer on a late night. I've spent my life fascinated with conspiracies, and over the last few years I've been horrified as they've taken a more central power in our cultural and political lives. There are people out there who think the best way to combat conspiracies is to bury them away. I think that often plays into the sense of victimhood many believers in conspiracy adopt. I think the best salve to this fanaticism is to understand what people believe, in all its strangeness, and consider how similar the conspiracies today are to the conspiracies 30 years ago or 100 years ago. We go back to the same well over and over, and understanding those patterns gives us a bit more power to resist their thrall.

Seeking to understand those patterns, and how they helped create this moment in history, is why I set out to create this book. But ultimately, ***The Department of Truth*** is a horror story. And I don't write horror to heal; I write it to probe what makes me uncomfortable about myself, my country, and the world. I think there's a lot to be uncomfortable about, and a lot to think about, and I can't imagine a language better to confront the strange stories we tell about ourselves than the language of conspiracy theories.

JAMES TYNION IV
BROOKLYN, NY | 2.7.23

CHAPTER 1 /

DALLAS, TX.
November 22, 1963.
7:55 p.m.

I'D LIKE SOME LEGAL REPRESENTATION. THESE POLICE OFFICERS HAVE NOT ALLOWED ME TO HAVE ANY...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?

I WORK IN THAT BUILDING.

WERE YOU IN THE BUILDING AT THAT TIME?

NATURALLY, IF I WORK IN THAT BUILDING. YES, SIR.

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?

THEY'RE TAKING ME IN BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT I LIVED IN THE SOVIET UNION.

I'M JUST A PATSY!

DID YOU SHOOT THE PRESIDENT?!

WE'RE GOING TO NEED THE ROOM.

THAT WASN'T A REQUEST.

HIT ME IN THE—

LEE.

I'M NOT... I'M NOT THE PERSON THEY ALL **THINK** I AM! I'M NOT THIS—

LEE. NOBODY IS LISTENING.

IT'S JUST US IN THIS ROOM.

...

I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD REALLY HAPPEN.

NONE OF THAT MATTERS ANYMORE.

WHAT DO **THEY** BELIEVE JUST HAPPENED? WHAT DO THE PEOPLE THINK—

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO SETTLE.

SOMETHING THIS BIG. THIS MOMENT IS GOING TO HAVE CONSEQUENCES. THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE.

THIS WORLD IS GOING TO **CHANGE.**

CAN'T FUCKING REMEMBER WHAT REALLY HAPPENED... IS THAT...IS IT HAPPENING TO ME? I'M A PART OF IT NOW, AREN'T I?

YES.

I WAS SENT HERE TO TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.

AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO TRY AND MAKE SURE EVERYBODY ELSE UNDERSTANDS THAT, TOO. DO YOU FOLLOW?

YES.

SHIT. YES. I UNDERSTAND.

GOOD. NOW SAY IT. SAY IT SO I KNOW YOU STILL REMEMBER.

SAY IT SO I KNOW YOU KNOW THE **TRUTH.**

UP IS DOWN AND DOWN IS UP.

CHAPTER ONE:
The End of the World

YOU GOING TO THROW UP?

NO.

MAYBE.

DON'T THROW UP.

OKAY.

ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME, TOO?

JUST DON'T THROW UP. THE LAST CAR THEY GAVE ME WAS SHIT. I LIKE THIS CAR.

OKAY.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
Present Day.

ARE YOU—?

DID YOU SEE IT, TOO? DID YOU SEE IT, OR AM I JUST COMPLETELY LOSING MY MIND?

YEAH, OKAY. YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.

IF YOU KEEP ASKING QUESTIONS, YEAH. PROBABLY.

TELL ME YOUR NAME, KID.

COLE. I'M COLE.

DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE?

I'M HERE... BECAUSE I SAW SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT CAN'T POSSIBLY EXIST. AND NOW I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.

HAH.

HE'S FUNNY.

HE'S NOT JOKING.

I KNOW. I DIDN'T MEAN HE WAS ACTUALLY FUNNY.

FBI.

YES, SIR.

QUANTICO. YOU'RE A TEACHER.

I...I'VE DONE SOME FIELD WORK.

BUT YOU'RE A TEACHER. YOU TEACH ABOUT FUNNY PICTURES ON THE INTERNET.

I, *UH*...I LOOK INTO THE SORTS OF DISCUSSIONS THAT HAPPEN AMONG RIGHT-WING WHITE NATIONALISTS IN THEIR ONLINE COMMUNITIES.

FUNNY PICTURES. THEY SHARE FUNNY PICTURES.

THEY AREN'T FUNNY. THEY'RE TYPICALLY NOT THAT ORIGINAL, AND... WELL, THEY'RE VERY RACIST.

THEY THINK THEY'RE FUNNY, I MEAN.

YEAH. I GUESS... YEAH.

AND THEN THERE'S THE CONSPIRACY THEORY STUFF.

UH... WELL, YES.

TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

I...I DON'T KNOW...

SON, YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO GET OVER WHETHER OR NOT WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU. I JUST WANT YOU TO FUCKING **TALK** TO US.

WHAT DO YOUR LITTLE MESSAGE BOARDS HAVE TO DO WITH CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

THEIR *ERR*...PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD. THEIR BELIEF THAT THE SYSTEM IS STACKED AGAINST THEM IN DELIBERATE WAYS. IT MAKES THEM... WELL, SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE.

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN STUDYING. THEIR... SUSCEPTIBILITY.

AND THAT'S HOW YOU GOT TO THE FLAT EARTH CONFERENCE.

YES.

START AT THE BEGINNING.

NONE OF THIS...THE SORT OF THINGS I THINK I SAW...

SIR, I WAS DRINKING OVER THE WEEKEND. AND I HAVEN'T SLEPT-- **REALLY** SLEPT-- IN ABOUT THREE DAYS.

I DO NOT TRUST MY MEMORIES, AND I DON'T SEE ANY REASON YOU SHOULD EITHER.

GOOD. THAT'S A VERY SENSIBLE ATTITUDE.

NOW TELL ME WHAT YOU SAW.

I remember walking into the hotel conference area and thinking that I had never seen so many polo shirts in my life.

Your mailman. Your accountant. The guy who scans your plane ticket at the airport. They were mostly, but not exclusively, men. Mostly, but not exclusively, white.

Just ordinary, boring people. Making jokes about the latest episode of a network TV show, or quoting an old *Family Guy*.

That's what struck me the most. You'd never pick them out in a crowd. They were anybody and everybody and nobody.

And they all had this grin on their face. A grin that said they knew a secret truth about this world. Something nobody else knew.

They believed the earth was flat.

That all scientific research to the contrary is a conspiracy to make us docile, so the government can feed us the facts they want us believe.

THE FLAT EARTH SOCIETY ANNUAL GATHERING

Well, some believe it's the government, some believe it's the church, and some have more...colorful suggestions.

FLAT EARTH and the PROTOCOLS of the ELDERS of ZION

They buy maps and models of the world for their homes and offices, to hang up next to their signed comic books and movie posters.

They listen to self-taught basement physicists twist scientific theory to their cause.

And then they drink at the hotel bar, and have the sort of excited arguments where they egg each other on, convinced they're going to get closer to the truth tomorrow.

WHY DO YOU THINK THEY BELIEVE?

IT'S...IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT CONTROL. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

IT'S A DESIRE TO REJECT THE ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT FEEL TOO COMPLICATED AND TOO ABSTRACT, AND BUILD A MORE COMFORTABLE REALITY THAT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND.

AND MORE THAN THAT...IT'S A SENSE...THAT IF THEY'RE RIGHT, AND THEY'RE ONTO THE TRUTH THAT'S BEEN KEPT SECRET ALL THIS TIME...

WELL, THEN THEY'RE HEROES, AREN'T THEY?

STANDING UP AGAINST THE AUTHORITY THAT'S TRYING TO KEEP THEM AND THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY DOWN.

THEY WANT REALITY TO MAKE SENSE IN A WAY THAT MAKES THEM IMPORTANT, AND SPECIAL.

EVERYONE WANTS TO FEEL LIKE THAT, RIGHT?

HEH.

WHAT?

TELL ME WHEN IT WENT SIDEWAYS.

YOU'RE COLE TURNER.

I, UH...YES.

SPECIAL AGENT COLE TURNER.

YES.

WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME?

I...I DON'T THINK...I SHOULD?

I HAVE... I'M MARRIED. I HAVE A HUSBAND AT HOME...I'M JUST...GOING TO BED?

YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME.

THIS IS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS. THE MOMENTS THAT CHANGE YOUR LIFE. THE MOMENTS THAT CHANGE EVERY-THING? DON'T YOU WANT THAT?

=GULP=

AH, MR. TURNER.

HE CAME. MARVELOUS, HE CAME. THANK YOU, SEBASTIAN.

OF COURSE. I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT.

NICE MEETING YOU.

UH, YEAH.

YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE?

KENNETH AND BERTRAM BOULET.

I LOVE WHEN THEY KNOW WHO WE ARE. DON'T YOU, BERTIE?

YOU WERE AT OUR LITTLE CARNIVAL TODAY, WEREN'T YOU? WALKING AROUND WITH THE LITTLE PEOPLE.

YES, SIR.

KEN. PLEASE.

IT'S MARVELOUS. THERE'S MORE EACH YEAR. THAT'S WHAT MAKES THIS ALL POSSIBLE.

THAT AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

LIKE ME?

WE HAVE MANY FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON, YOUNG MAN. EVEN IF THEY DON'T SEE EYE TO EYE, THEY HELP US MAKE ALL THIS POSSIBLE. IF WE KEEP THE WHEELS GREASED.

BUT WE'VE BEEN WANTING TO RECRUIT A BELIEVER. SOMEONE IN INTELLIGENCE. AND THEN YOU STUMBLED INTO OUR LITTLE PARTY.

NOW, SON, DO YOU **BELIEVE**?

I remember how terrible his breath was. That's what stuck in my mind.

The fortune from their Texas Oil company had been funding right-wing politicians for the last two decades.

I remember thinking, how does a man worth billions of dollars have such terrible breath?

But that's not what I said. What I said was...

YES. I BELIEVE.

They took me into a little side room. Not much bigger than this. There were other people there. All men. All white. All dressed in suits...Except...

There was a woman, dressed in red. She was wearing these sunglasses in the dark room, and it scared me. I don't know why it scared me so much...

I just knew she couldn't see wearing those things, and I got this pit in my stomach.

There was a film playing, in black and white, on an old projector.

As it played, the men in the room leaned in. There was this smell in the air. This...I don't know. It was like a smug musk.

It got worse when she SMILED at me.

Anticipation on the edge of orgasm.

Like we were watching something obscene and decadent.

It was the moon rover. The landing. The shot of Neil Armstrong descending the ladder, ready to make his one small step for man.

But there was something off about it. I couldn't put my finger on it at first, but I quickly realised.

The angle of the shot was all wrong. It was from a different vantage point. I was trying to figure out why when I saw something in the dark behind the lunar rover.

It was a man, holding a cardboard cup of coffee. No space helmet, no anything. Just this ordinary, tired-looking man on the moon.

The room erupted as they saw him. But I just broke out in a nervous sweat.

The Boulets said it was from Kubrick's private collection. That it'd been held in a government warehouse for the last few decades.

They talked about a plan to release it to the press, in due time. But that it would need to be coordinated with their BIGGER find.

That's when one of the brothers leaned in and asked me if I wanted to take a trip with them, and see how deep the rabbit hole went.

WHY DID YOU GO?

THE BOULETS FUND MOST OF THE CORNERS OF THE INTERNET I STUDY. THE EXTREMIST CORNERS. HONESTLY, I THOUGHT I WAS COMING IN AT THE GROUND FLOOR OF SOMETHING.

THEM TRYING TO CREATE THEIR OWN CONSPIRACY THEORY TO FEED THE TROLLS AND KEEP THEM AGITATED AND PLIABLE.

THAT'S NOT WHY. YOU WANTED TO SEE SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE OF ALL OF THIS BULLSHIT. BECAUSE IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE IT HAD BEEN DOCTORED...

AND IF THAT VIDEO WASN'T BULLSHIT, IT MEANT A WHOLE LOT ELSE YOU BELIEVE **IS** BULLSHIT.

OKAY, YEAH. THAT'S WHY.

AND I'D NEVER BEEN ON A PRIVATE PLANE BEFORE.

THEY SAID THEIR GOVERNMENT CONTACTS WERE COVERING FOR ME. BUT THEY WOULDN'T TELL ME WHERE THEY WERE GOING. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO SPOIL THE SURPRISE.

THE OTHER MEN, THEY DRANK THE WHOLE TIME. I MIGHT HAVE HAD A GLASS OR TWO, BUT MOSTLY I STARED OUT THE WINDOW...

YOU WANTED TO SEE THE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH, WITH YOUR OWN EYES. AND I'M SURE YOU DID, BUT THERE WAS THIS SENSE THAT MAYBE IT WAS JUST YOUR IMAGINATION.

YOU DIDN'T TRUST WHAT YOU WERE SEEING, DID YOU?

NO.

I DIDN'T.

I don't know how long the flight was...

It felt like days. And I don't know. It may have been. We stopped to refuel a few times.

I can't imagine what my husband was thinking.

The party was continuing, and you could just feel the stench of excitement in the air. The plane felt thick with it.

And I just sat, feeling sick in my seat. Time melted away. I felt... unmoored more than anything. Hungover from what I'd seen in that screening room.

I had dozed off, when a hand shook my shoulder.

COLE. YOU'RE MISSING IT. YOU'RE AT THE END OF EVERY-THING, AND YOU'RE MISSING THE DAMN SHOW.

LOOK OUT YOUR WINDOW, AND SEE WHAT THEY'VE BEEN HIDING FROM US, ALL THESE YEARS.

WHAT... WHERE ARE WE...?

WE'RE OFF THE EDGE OF THE MAP, BOY.

HERE THERE BE MONSTERS.

OH. OH, JESUS.

YES, PRAISE JESUS.

I NEED... I NEED TO...

MOVE. I NEED THE BATHROOM... I NEED.

DID YOU SEE?

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEE

FUCKING HELL...

ALRIGHT, GENTS. WE'LL BE LANDING AT THE BASECAMP IN A MOMENT. FROM THERE WE CAN TAKE A HELICOPTER UP CLOSE.

WE STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THE TOP OF THE THING. WHERE IT MEETS THE SKY...BUT WE'LL TAKE YOU AS HIGH AS WE CAN GO.

SEATBELTS. THIS IS GOING TO BE BUMPY.

THUNK

I'M SORRY, DEAR, BUT DO YOU WORK FOR US?

DOES SHE **LOOK** LIKE SHE WORKS FOR US, BERTIE?

WHO SENT YOU? ARE YOU FROM BLACK HAT?

NOPE.

COLE TURNER?

Y-YES.

SPECIAL AGENT COLE TURNER?

YES.

I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME.

THAT'S ALL I KNOW. YOU CAN KILL ME NOW.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO FUCKING KILL YOU. CALM DOWN.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, RUBY?

HE'S FINE.

YEAH?

YEAH. HE'LL DO. HE'S IN SHOCK, BUT HE KEPT ALL THE IMPORTANT DETAILS.

I COULD USE SOMEONE A BIT MORE PLUGGED IN TO THE MOMENT. NOT ANOTHER COLD WAR UFO HUNTER WITH A TINFOIL HAT.

AND YOU KNOW HIS HISTORY. WHAT HE WAS A PART OF IN THE '80S.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WE'RE **POACHING** YOU. YOU'VE BEEN POACHED. YOU DON'T WORK FOR THE FBI ANYMORE. YOU WORK FOR US.

I DON'T...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

SON, THE WORLD IS ROUND.

IT GOES AROUND THE SUN. GET ME A BIG LASER POINTER AND A FEW METER STICKS AND I CAN PROVE IT TO YOU.

THAT'S THE **TRUTH.**

BUT THAT'S NOT THE TRUTH BECAUSE OF SCIENCE.

WHAT YOU SAW THERE, AT THE END OF THE WORLD, WAS A SLIVER OF ANOTHER KIND OF TRUTH TAKING HOLD.

YOU'RE SAYING IT WAS A KIND OF TULPA...SPACE?

WHEN THE FUCK DID THE WHOLE FUCKING WORLD GO BUDDHIST?

YOU'RE ALL GOING TO BE SHAVING YOUR HEAD AND SINGING TO ME WITH THIS HIPPY BULLSHIT...

THAT'S HARE KRISHNA.

I'M BEING FUNNY.

YOU'RE BEING HORRIBLE.

A TULPA IS A THOUGHTFORM... A BELIEF GIVEN A BODY.

I KNOW WHAT A FUCKING TULPA IS, COLE. JESUS. AND YOU'RE PART-RIGHT. YOU'RE JUST MISSING THE SCALE OF THE THING.

I'M GOING TO TELL YOU THE SECRET. THE BIG SECRET THAT YOU'VE KNOWN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

THE MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, THE MORE TRUE THAT THING BECOMES. THE MORE REALITY TIPS IN THE FAVOR OF THAT BELIEF.

WHAT HAPPENED IN ANTARCTICA WAS THAT A GROUP OF MEN MANAGED TO MAKE ENOUGH PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH OF A FLAT EARTH FOR IT TO MANIFEST IN REALITY.

IF THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO BRING PROOF OF THAT BACK TO AMERICA, AND SPREAD IT...

THE WORLD WOULD CHANGE.

THE MOON LANDING WOULD BE A HOAX. EVERY GOVERNMENT, EVERY AIRLINE, EVERY COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION, THEY WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN IN ON IT FROM THE BEGINNING.

RETROACTIVELY, THE EARTH WOULD **ALWAYS** HAVE BEEN FLAT. AND THE PEOPLE WOULD RIGHTLY RISE UP IN FURY, HAVING BEEN LIED TO BY **EVERYONE** FOR **DECADES.**

THAT IS WHY THIS ORGANIZATION EXISTS. WE HAVE SPENT THE LAST CENTURY MAKING SURE THAT CONSPIRACY THEORIES **STAY** CONSPIRACY THEORIES.

AND NOW YOU GET TO BE A PART OF IT. LUCKY YOU.

RUBY HERE WILL GET YOU SORTED. YOU ANSWER TO HER NOW.

WAIT...I HAVE QUESTIONS.

I WOULDN'T WANT YOU IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE QUESTIONS. THERE WILL BE TIME FOR ALL THAT.

WHO WAS THE WOMAN IN RED WITH NO EYES? WHY DID THEY THINK RUBY WORKED FOR SOMETHING CALLED BLACK HAT?

SON, YOU KNOW DAMN WELL EACH OF THOSE QUESTIONS WILL LEAD TO MORE QUESTIONS, AND MORE QUESTIONS AFTER THAT.

AT LEAST WAIT UNTIL WE'RE PAYING YOU, FOR GOD'S SAKE.

LOOK, I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THE HELL YOU PEOPLE ARE...

HEH, I GUESS I SKIPPED THAT PART, DIDN'T I?

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MY NAME IS LEE HARVEY OSWALD.

WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

CHAPTER 2

KEEP GOING, COLE. TELL US WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

I DON'T KNOW.

REC

YOU SAID YOU WERE IN THE BASEMENT WITH MR. AND MRS. HARKEY.

YES.

AND THERE WAS ANOTHER MAN.

HE WAS... WEARING A CAPE. A DRACULA CAPE.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT ELSE HE LOOKED LIKE?

N-NO.

DID HE HAVE ANY SPECIAL **MARKINGS**? ANYTHING THAT WOULD HELP US RECOGNIZE HIM?

A **STAR.**

A STAR ON HIS FACE. AND A DRACULA CAPE.

THANK YOU, COLE. YOU'RE DOING GREAT.

NO.

ARE YOU TIRED? WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A BREAK?

THE STAR-FACED MAN, HE SAID...

IT'S OKAY, COLE. NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

THIS BABY ISN'T REAL. YOU CAN'T TASTE ITS MEAT. YOU CAN'T SMELL ITS BLOOD.

THIS IS ALL A DREAM LIKE YOUR MAMMA SAYS. LIKE YOUR TEACHER SAYS.

I'M A DREAM MAN, AND YOUR TEACHER LET ME IN.

AND I'M HUNNNNNGRY.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. NONE OF THIS COUNTS.

IT'S NOT REAL SO IT DOESN'T COUNT.

YOU JUST CAN'T WAKE UP UNTIL I SAY SO.

OR HEEEEE'LL FIND YOU, AND GOOOOOBBBLE YOU UP.

HE SAID NOT TO TALK.

IT'S OKAY, COLE, YOU CAN TALK TO ME.

HE SAID NO. HE SAID THE **DEVIL KNOWS.** HE SAID HE'D FIND ME.

I WANT TO WAKE UP. I WANT TO WAKE UP.

I WANT TO WAKE UP!

-:SIGH:- OKAY. STOP THE TAPE.

CHAPTER
DEVILS,
REAL AND
IMAGINED

YOU DIDN'T SLEEP.

I SLEPT.

YOU WERE STARING AT THE CEILING AT 5 A.M.

IT SOUNDS LIKE **YOU** DIDN'T SLEEP.

I NEVER SLEEP. I AM TERRIBLE AT SLEEPING. YOU NORMALLY SLEEP LIKE A ROCK.

I SLEPT FINE, MATTY.

OKAY.

DON'T DO THAT.

DO WHAT?

SAY OKAY LIKE THAT. LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE A FIGHT LATER.

I THINK I AM BEING VERY REASONABLE GIVEN THE FACT THAT MY HUSBAND DISAPPEARED FOR A FEW DAYS LAST WEEK AND WON'T TELL ME WHY.

OKAY.

YOU'VE LEARNED MY EVIL TRICKS.

MATTY...

WHAT'S UP?

LET'S SAY YOU COULD FIND OUT THAT ONE BIG CONSPIRACY THEORY WAS TRUE. LIKE YOU COULD PICK AND MAKE IT REAL AND FIND OUT ALL THE SECRETS BEHIND IT.

WHAT CRAZY CONSPIRACY THEORY DO YOU WANT ALL THE ANSWERS TO?

HMMM. I VOTE REPTILIANS.

REPTILIANS.

THE SHAPE-SHIFTING LIZARD ILLUMINATI THAT RULE OUR WORLD. THERE ARE VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE THAT SHOW DICK CHENEY BLINKING SIDEWAYS WITH VERTICAL EYE SLITS.

YOU KNOW? LIKE THE GUY AT THE START OF *MEN IN BLACK*?

WAIT. I SHOULD HAVE SAID THE MEN IN BLACK, SHOULDN'T I? ALIENS WOULD BE COOL.

NO. I WANT TO ASK LIZARD DICK CHENEY SOME HARD-HITTING QUESTIONS AND THEN TRY NOT TO GET LAUGHED OUT OF THE *POST* EDITORIAL MEETINGS WHEN I GO TO REPORT THEM.

I DIDN'T THINK THEY LET PROOFREADERS INTO THOSE MEETINGS.

THAT WAS BEFORE I GOT TAPPED BY THE REPTILIAN ILLUMINATI TO RUN THE PAPER.

AND YOU'RE GOING TO OUT THEM, AFTER THEY GOT YOU A CUSHY JOB?

FAIR POINT.

I KNOW WHAT **YOU'D** ASK ABOUT.

YEAH.

THIS ISN'T A FUN ASIDE, IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?

I'M SORRY. MY JOB. IT'S... DRAGGING THINGS UP.

STARFACE.

YEAH.

HE'S NOT REAL. THOSE FUCKERS AND THEIR PUPPETS JUST LED YOU--

I KNOW.

HE'S ABOUT AS REAL AS THE REPTILIANS.

YEAH.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU?

NO. I'M SORRY. I REALLY CAN'T.

OKAY, THEN. YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU?

YES.

IT'S OKAY, COLE. NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

YOU HERE TO MAKE SURE I DIDN'T GO RUNNING OFF TO THE PRESS OR SOMETHING?

OR SOMETHING.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT MATTY, I'VE NEVER SHARED ANYTHING I WAS WORKING ON WITH THE BUREAU, AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO START--

COLE. CALM DOWN. I'M NOT HERE FOR ANY OF THAT.

HOW ARE YOU?

EXCUSE ME?

I FEEL LIKE SOMEBODY RIPPED OUT ALL MY INSIDES AND PUT THEM BACK INSIDE ME.

PANCAKES?

WHAT?

COLE.

JESUS.

SORRY.

I REALLY THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME.

SOMETIMES I FORGET TO TURN THE SNEAKY OFF.

LOOK, WE'RE GOING TO GO BACK IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH OFFICES, AND YOU'RE GOING TO NEED TO PRETEND THAT THE GROUND DIDN'T JUST DROP OUT FROM UNDER YOU...

I'M ASKING, AND I REALLY WANT TO KNOW. HOW ARE YOU?

DO YOU EAT PANCAKES?

OH, I MEAN... I GUESS?

LET'S GET YOU SOME PANCAKES.

THEY'RE GOOD.

I WOULDN'T TAKE YOU FOR SHITTY PANCAKES. I RESPECT MY TIME.

I SINCERELY THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO KILL ME THIS TIME.

DON'T PUSH IT, KID.

I BROUGHT YOU HERE BECAUSE YOU JUST GOT DROPPED IN THE DEEP END, AND I'M GIVING YOU A CHANCE TO ASK ME ALL THE SHIT YOU WANT TO ASK, BUT KNOW YOU PROBABLY CAN'T ON THE JOB.

HEH.

WHAT?

IT'S FUNNY. I'M SURE THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE ELSE WANTS WHEN YOU RECRUIT. THEY JUST SIGNED UP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH, AND NOW THEY WANT THE **REAL** ANSWERS.

BUT THERE AREN'T ANY. ISN'T THAT THE POINT?

YES. BUT PEOPLE ARE STUPID, SO THEY STILL HAVE QUESTIONS. AND I'M SURE YOU DO, TOO.

I SAW A LITERAL ICE WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD, RUBY. I SAW PROOF THAT STANLEY KUBRICK FAKED THE MOON LANDING. I **KNOW** THE ANSWER TO EACH OF MY QUESTIONS.

COLLECTIVE BELIEF SHAPES THE WORLD, SO EVERYTHING IS A LITTLE BIT TRUE, OR HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE TRUE.

ARE THERE ALIENS IN AREA 51? I'M SURE THERE ARE, OR THERE WERE, OR THERE **SOMETIMES** ARE DEPENDING ON WHICH MOVIES CAME OUT THAT YEAR.

MY HUSBAND WAS JOKING ABOUT REPTILIANS EARLIER.

I BET YOU'VE SEEN THEM WITH YOUR OWN EYES.

DAMN HARD TO KILL.

WAS THERE SOMEONE ON THE GRASSY KNOLL? THAT ONE IS HARDER.

IT IS, AND IT ISN'T.

BUT THAT'S NOT MY STORY TO TELL.

YOU THINK IT'S REALLY HIM? THAT THE DIRECTOR IS REALLY LEE HARVEY OSWALD? **THE** LEE HARVEY OSWALD?

THAT'S A GOOD WAY OF PHRASING IT. THE QUESTION IS WHICH OSWALD WAS HE? IS HE THE OSWALD WHO SHOT JFK? IS HE THE PATSY?

HE'S PROBABLY NOT THE ONE KILLED BY JACK RUBY.

ON THAT NOTE, I DON'T THINK I'M PAID TO BELIEVE IN COINCIDENCE ANYMORE. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TELL ME YOUR REAL NAME ONE OF THESE DAYS.

I DON'T HAVE TO DO A DAMN THING I DON'T WANT TO. I JUST BOUGHT YOU PANCAKES.

FAIR.

YOU'RE HANDLING ALL OF THIS WELL.

THE CORE CONCEIT OF IT ALL...THAT I CAN GRASP. THAT I UNDERSTAND.

IN THE ABSTRACT, IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE. THE PROBLEM IS WHERE IT GETS PERSONAL.

SATANIC PANIC.

It's just so strange to think, now.

There was a decade, a full decade, where the average person believed that the country was teeming with Satanic Cults, abusing and murdering children.

That there were secret messages in video games and music. And that your children's preschool teachers, they might be the enemy.

The McMartin Preschool Trial was the most famous. There were six years of criminal trials, six years of investigations, six years of interviewing children who didn't even know how to read.

The kids talked about being flushed down toilets and winding up in secret tunnels deep beneath the school. About seeing their teacher hovering in the air.

But there were no toilet entrances or secret tunnels or flying teachers. Just a bunch of scared children pushed into corroborating fictions by a frenzied public.

And that was <u>one school</u>. These cases happened all over the country.

But in a decade of cases, there was not one shred of evidence that Satanic Ritual Abuse ever occurred in this country.

Now, we know more.

We know that they were leading the witnesses. We know that kids were mimicking what they heard on the news, and what they heard in the questions they were being asked.

IT HAPPENED AT YOUR SCHOOL.

YES.

I remember the day my mom got a letter. She and my dad sat me down, and asked me if any of my teachers had ever done anything...uncouth.

And this was right when child abuse was just starting to get widespread attention. People were starting to believe what children told them.

And...Look...I still have the transcripts. I know everything I said. I don't know that we got much national attention, but it was all over the news in the upper Midwest.

My version of the toilets was a secret passage behind the bookcase where they kept the Play-Doh. And I talked about seeing my teachers eating other kids, and making us eat them.

But I don't have a memory of that. I don't even really remember saying those things. But there is something I do remember, and I can still see it viscerally, now.

I still remember the man with a pentagram scarred into his face eating a baby in front of me. Even though I know it never happened.

When I had the dreams in the past, I knew I could go through the facts. I could assure myself that this never happened.

That it was a nightmare pried out of me by unscrupulous lawyers and psychologists.

BUT NOW...

NOW YOU WANT TO KNOW IF YOUR STAR-FACED MAN WAS REAL. IF HE'S STILL OUT THERE.

I WOULDN'T SAY I WANT TO KNOW. WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS OLD, A MAN IN MY HEAD TOLD ME THAT IF I TOLD ANYONE ABOUT HIM HE WOULD SEND THE DEVIL TO EAT ME.

AND THEN I TOLD THE WORLD ABOUT HIM.

I DON'T **WANT** TO KNOW, RUBY. I **NEED** TO KNOW.

OKAY, THEN.

IT'S TIME TO HIT **ROCK BOTTOM.**

DING

HOW MANY SUB-BASEMENTS ARE THERE IN THE BUILDING?

TWELVE I KNOW ABOUT.

BUT THIS IS THE DEEPEST I HAVE ACCESS TO.

ROCK BOTTOM.

YEAH.

IT SMELLS.

WE DON'T LET THEM OUT MUCH.

RUBY, IS THAT YOU?

HEY, HUNKY. I BROUGHT YOU PANCAKES.

CHOCOLATE CHIP?

OF COURSE.

THAT'S WHY I LOVE YOU. THEY SHOULD PUT YOU ON MONEY, AND WORSHIP YOU IN TEMPLES.

WHAT'S ON THE BOOB TUBE TONIGHT?

NOT ENOUGH BOOBS, IF I'M BEING HONEST. NOT THE GOOD KIND, ANYWAYS.

I PRAY TO XENU EACH NIGHT THAT CONSPIRACY THEORIES START GETTING SPREAD BY NAKED LADIES WITH BIG BUTTS AND COOL TATTOOS, AND NOT HORRIBLE SEXPESTS WITH SMALL PENISES AND UGLY FACES.

YOU'RE THE NEW KID.

YEAH. COLE TURNER.

WELCOME TO THE CIRCUS. I'M THE 800-POUND MAN THEY KEEP LOCKED IN A CAGE, WATCHING TELEVISION. PLEASE CALL THE AUTHORITIES. I WANT TO BE PUT IN A PROPER ZOO, WHERE I CAN SEE THE SUN.

THAT'S A JOKE, BY THE WAY. THE SUN IS MY ENEMY.

I HAVE TO JOKE OR ELSE I'LL START SCREAMING. I HAVE TO WATCH THESE IDIOTS DAY IN AND DAY OUT AND SEE WHAT DANGEROUS VOMIT COMES FLYING OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS.

THIS IS THE MAINLINE RIGHT INTO THE HEART. WHERE MOST PEOPLE GET THEIR NEWS. THESE ARE THE MONSTROSITIES FUCKING UP THE WHOLE GODDAMN WORLD.

ANYTHING NEW?

THE SHITWEASEL'S TALKING ABOUT THE JEWS AGAIN. NOTHING CREATIVE, BUT WE'LL NEED TO RE-KICK SOME OLD TIRES.

THE FESTERING TUMOR STARTED SHOUTING SOMETHING ABOUT MEXICAN PEOPLE HIDING IN THE TRUNKS OF YOUR CARS. I BET THAT ONE'S GONNA CATCH.

THE OOZING WALRUS HAS ANOTHER FALSE-FLAG THING. I'LL WRITE IT UP. YOU KNOW HOW THOSE CASES GO.

OOZING WALRUS...

I HAVE MY LITTLE PET NAMES FOR ALL MY FRIENDS, COLE. IT'S HOW THEY KNOW I LOVE THEM.

ANYTHING ON SATAN? SATANIC RITUAL ABUSE.

YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE '80S. I LOVE THE '80S. BUT NOT MY AREA.

YOU'RE GOING TO WANT DOCTOR TIN-FOIL.

IF EITHER OF YOU WERE IN THIS DEPARTMENT IN THE '70S, YOU WOULDN'T BE LAUGHING AT MY HAT.

AND IT'S **STILL** IN THE MEDIA. IT MIGHT BE A JOKE, BUT THERE'S STILL AN UNDERLYING BELIEF STRUCTURE.

IF YOU WANT THE ENEMY TO RIP ALL OF THESE FLIPPING SECRETS OUT OF YOUR HEAD, YOU CAN BE MY GUEST.

DOC. THE NEW KID WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT ANY CONSISTENT FIGURES IN SATANIC RITUAL ABUSE CASES. ONES THAT MIGHT HAVE STEPPED OUT OF THE STORIES.

OH, OH SURE. SATANIC PANIC. THAT HAS ITS OWN ROOM IN THE BACK.

THIS IS HOW YOU KEEP THE ARCHIVES?

YES, I DEVELOPED THE SYSTEM BACK IN THE LATE '60S WITH LEE. WILD TIMES. COLD WAR WAS IN PLAY, AND YOU NEVER KNEW WHEN A NEWSPAPER MIGHT HAVE SECRET MESSAGES.

AND YOU DIDN'T DIGITIZE...

DIGITAL MEDIA CHANGES TOO QUICK. IT'S SO REACTIVE. YOU NEVER KNOW WHICH CHANGES HIT WIKIPEDIA BECAUSE PEOPLE'S BELIEFS SHIFT, OR IF IT'S ALL JUST A NO-GOOD TEENAGER.

AND THOSE MACHINES ARE TRYING TO REPROGRAM YOUR MINDS. THEY'RE SUCCEEDING, TOO. I LET THE KID DEAL WITH ALL OF THAT.

THE KID?

UP ON YOUR LEFT...

SAY HI, FRANK.

SHE SEEMS NICE.

THAT IS HER BEING NICE. YOU SHOULD SEE HER WHEN SHE'S SOBER.

I'M GOING TO BE ASKING YOU FOR A DEBRIEF SOON, HELP UPDATE MY ROOMS ON FLAT EARTH AND THE MOON LANDING.

NEVER THOUGHT THE FLAT EARTHERS WOULD SUBSUME THE MOON TRUTHERS, BUT THIS IS A WILD WORLD, ISN'T IT?

I'M GOING TO NEED MORE STRING. MAYBE TAKE DOWN A WALL.

OKAY, HERE. SATANIC PANIC.

DARK STUFF. I HATE WHEN KIDS GET DRAGGED INTO ALL OF THIS. THEY'RE SO PLIABLE, THEY BELIEVE SO READILY. I MEAN HECK, IF THERE WERE ENOUGH KIDS IN THE WORLD, WE'D HAVE TO GO KILL SANTA CLAUS EVERY YEAR.

THANKFULLY, THAT'S ONLY HAD TO HAPPEN ONCE OR TWICE.

IT'S A CYCLICAL THING. IT HAPPENS IN TIMES OF PRIMAL CULTURAL FEAR. SOME CHRISTIANS BELIEVED THAT JEWS WERE EATING THEIR BABIES UP UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY. THAT WAS THE PRIMARY MODE OF THIS THEORY FOR A LONG TIME.

MORE RECENTLY IT'S DEMOCRATS. PIZZAGATE AND THE LIKE. BUT THERE'S STILL A RESIDUAL SATANIC IMPRINT ON THE CONCEPT. RITUAL PEDOPHILIA AS AN AFFRONT TO A CHRISTIAN GOD.

YOU WERE ASKING ABOUT A SINGULAR FIGURE...AND THERE ISN'T ONE. I THINK ANTON LAVEY HELPED SHAPE THE MODERN IMAGE OF A SATANIST IN POPULAR CULTURE, AND THERE ARE LITTLE TAGS, BUT THE SYMBOLS ARE JUMBLED TOGETHER...

WITHOUT ANYONE EVER CONVICTED FOR RITUAL ABUSE...THERE WASN'T ANYONE THE PUBLIC COULD SINK THEIR CLAWS INTO. NO ONE SPECIFIC FOR OUR DEPARTMENT TO GO AND SHUT DOWN.

I'M SORRY, DOC...

WHAT YEAR IS THIS PICTURE FROM?

PLEASE DON'T REMOVE ANY PINS FROM THE WALLS. THIS IS AN INTRICATE SYSTEM, AND ANY INTERFERENCE...

WHAT YEAR?!

THIS IS FROM LAST YEAR. WHY?

IT'S OKAY, COLE. NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

COLE, IS THAT...?

YES.

DO YOU HAVE TRANSCRIPTS FROM THIS KID'S FILE? WERE THEY INTERVIEWED?

I...I CAN LOOK.

HE SAID... IT WAS OKAY... HE SAID IT WASN'T REAL.

BUT HE... BUT HE WAS EATING THE BABY.

IT'S OKAY, CARRIE...

HE...HE SAID THE DEVIL WAS THERE. THAT SHE WAS WATCHING ME...

AND THEN... AND THEN SHE STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

SHE...SHE WAS WEARING A RED DRESS.

AND HER EYES...SHE DIDN'T HAVE REAL EYES.

BUT SHE COULD SEE ME.

AND SHE WAS SMILING.

NO...

SHIT... COLE.

IT'S OKAY, COLE. NONE OF THIS IS REAL.

DOC, GET LEE...HE'S HAVING A BREAK.

NO! I WANT TO WAKE UP!

DID YOU SEE? IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEE

I WANT TO WAKE UP!!

CHAPTER 3

She remembers the first time she watched one of the videos. She remembers the man's red face, his jowls, his spittle, and his rage.

She had started getting angry messages mixed in with the condolences. She thought it was a joke at first. How could anyone not believe the shooting was real?

The image of the classroom door riddled with bullet holes was shown by every cable news channel for weeks. She had heard the gunshots herself, on a message from her son.

Him crying, begging for her to come save him. She had listened over and over to the bullets as they ripped her son's life away, and this sweating hog of a man was saying it hadn't happened? That it was a hoax?

She remembers laughing as she finished the video. She couldn't help herself.

She was comforted knowing that no one could possibly believe it.

YOUR
HANDS OFF
MY GUNS!

THEY ARE COMING, MARK MY WORDS. THEY'LL PULL EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK TO STRIP DOWN YOUR ARSENAL, AND THEN THEY'LL COME!

AND WHAT? YOU'LL FIGHT OFF THEIR DRONE MISSILES WITH STICKS?! NO! YOU'LL NEED THE HEAVY ARTILLERY!

THIS IS YOUR GOD-DAMNED COUNTRY! THESE ARE YOUR GOD-DAMNED RIGHTS!

YOU BEEN DRINKING, MARY? YOU DON'T SEEM YOURSELF.

OH, NO. I'M JUST FINE.

DID YOU TALK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE CAR?

IT'S LIKE I SAID BEFORE, MARY. THEY'RE FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY.

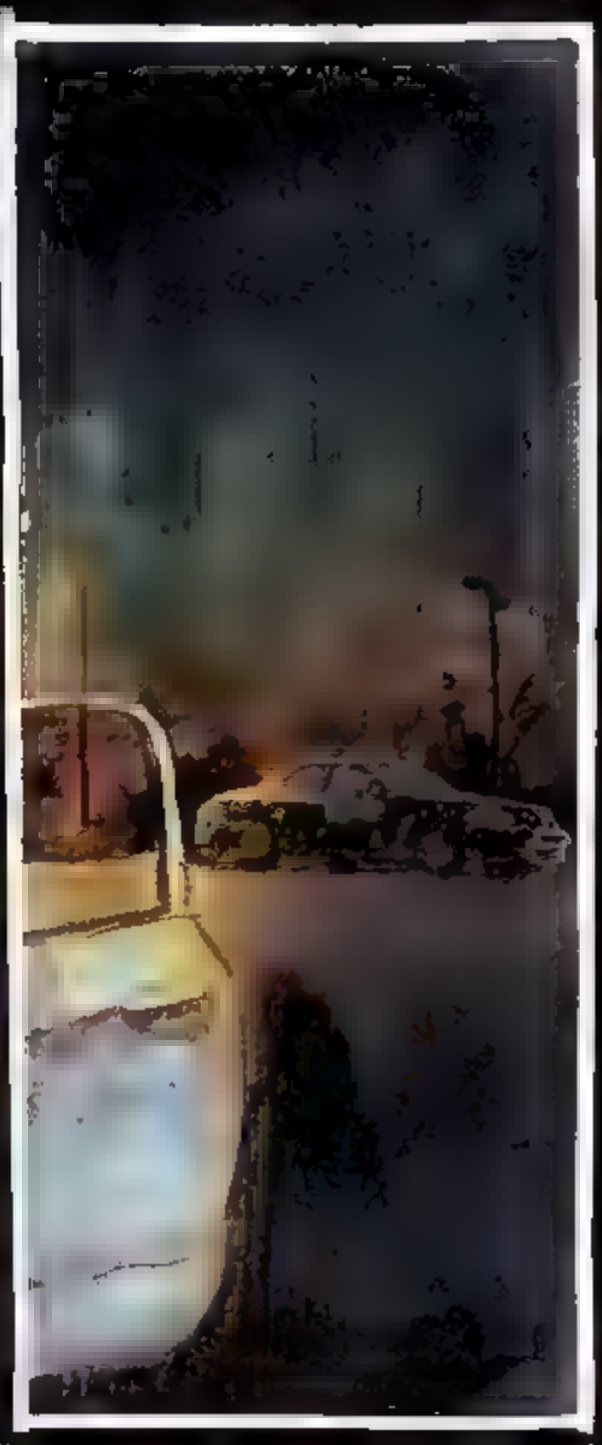
THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE IT.

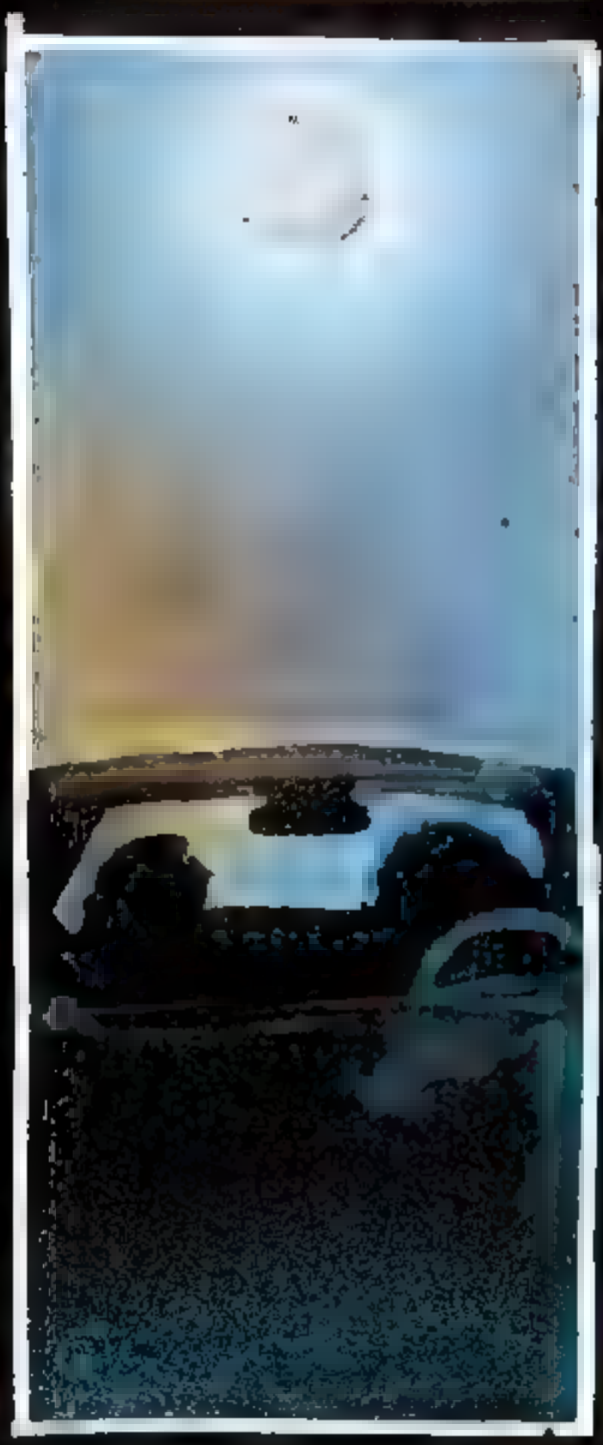
I CALLED IT IN, AND THEY SAY IT'S LEGIT. BUT YOU KNOW YOU CAN CALL ME HERE IF YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE, OKAY? I CAN BE AT YOUR DOOR IN JUST A COUPLE OF MINUTES.

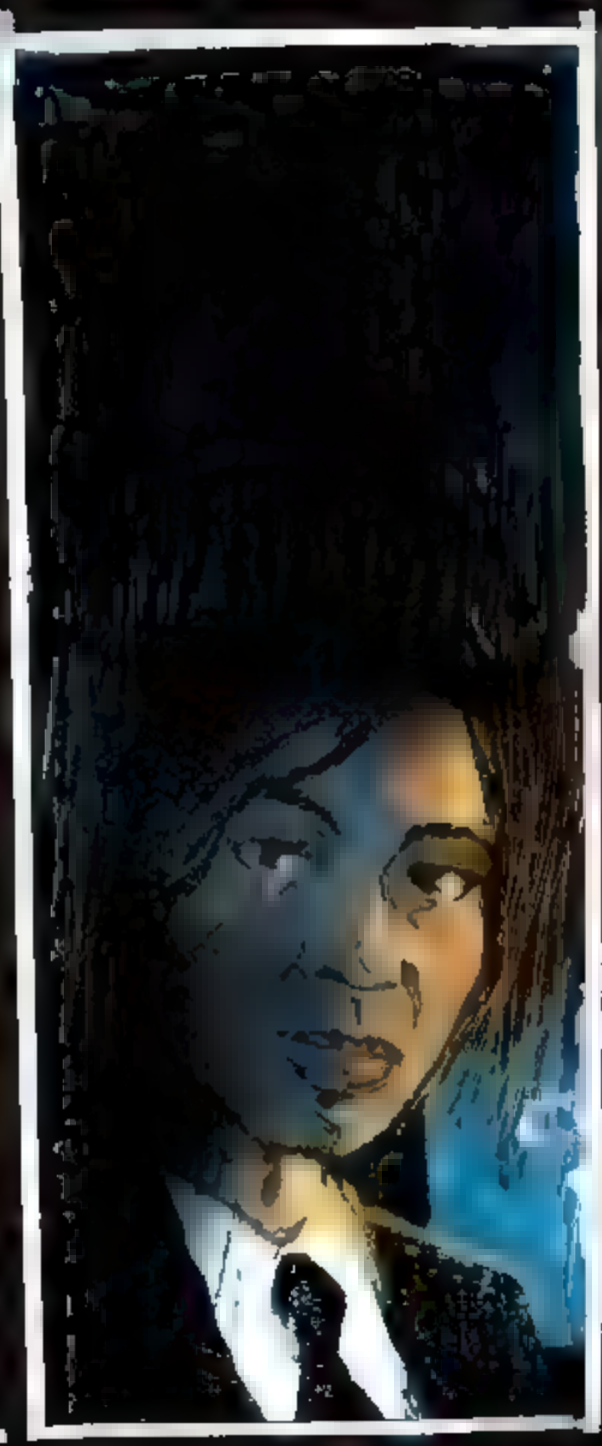
SECURITY

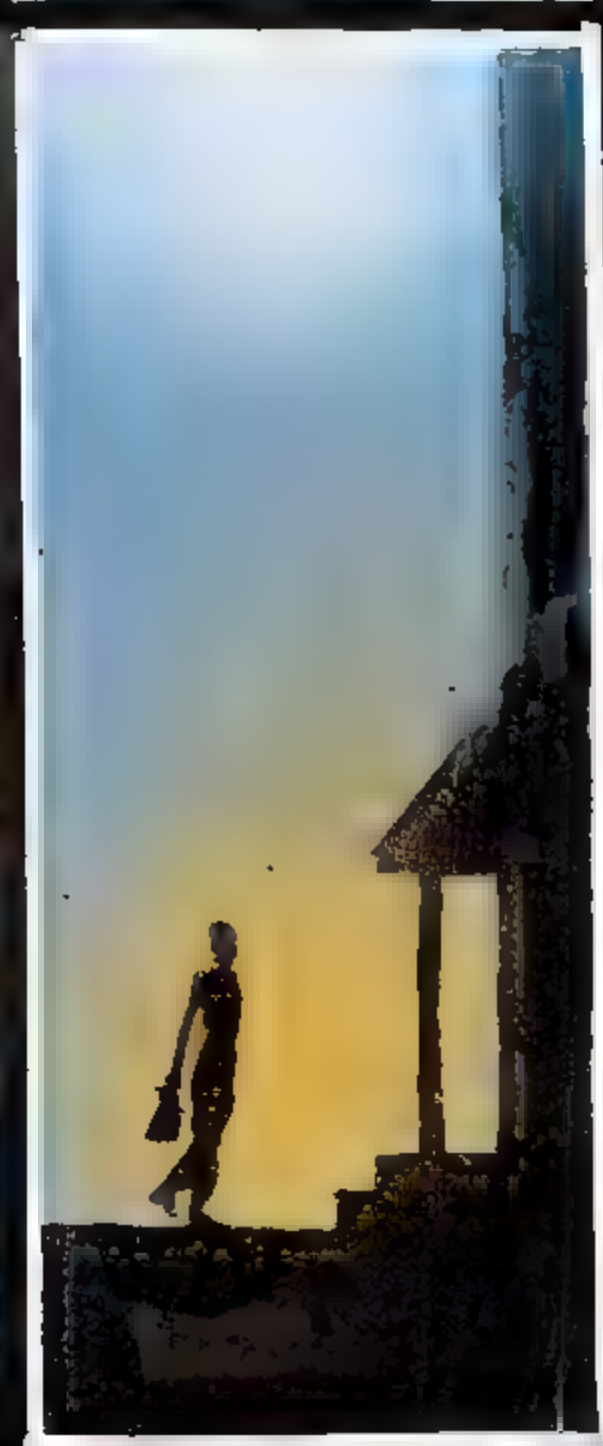
I'M SURE IT'S FINE, THEN.

NO ONE IS GOING TO FIGHT FOR YOU! IF YOU'RE A REAL AMERICAN, YOU HAVE TO FIGHT FOR YOURSELF!

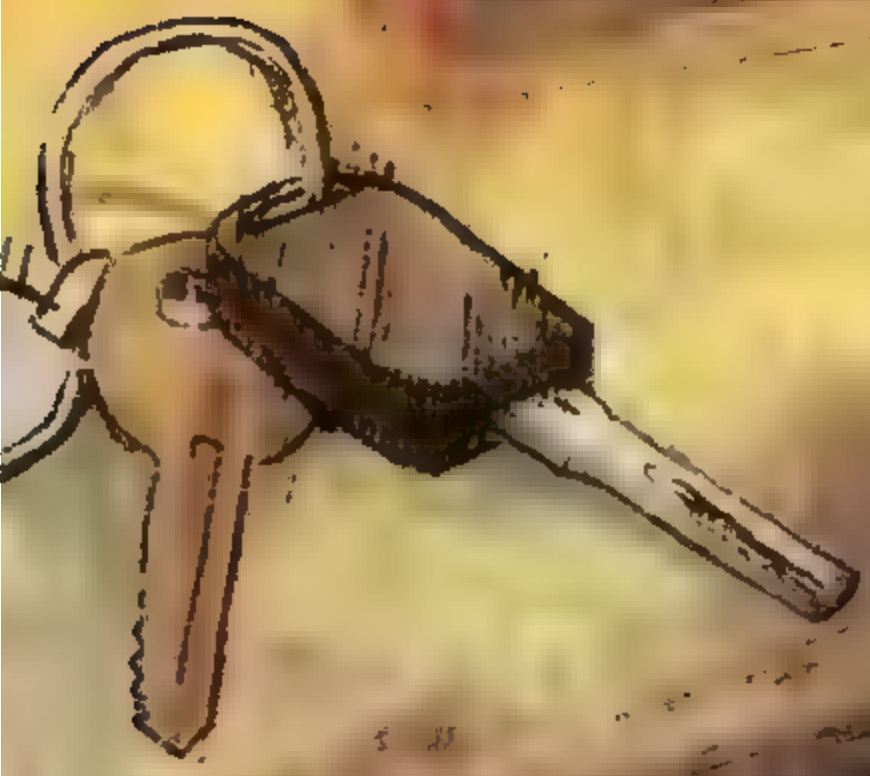








CHAPTER THREE
BLACK AND WHITE



She had never heard the phrase *"false flag"* before the video. She had to google it.

It had once been the term they used to refer to a ship flying the flag of their opponent to sneak behind enemy lines. Now it was mostly used in the strange corners of the internet.

People claimed that left wing groups and the media were paying *"crisis actors"* to fake a rise in gun violence against children across the country.

They believed that this would create the groundswell of support the government needed to step in and take the guns of everyday honest Americans.

There were pictures of her and her son on message boards. Long threads comparing her boy to child actors from commercials filmed years ago, trying to prove their case.

One of the forums found her personal email. The messages started, calling her a liar and a government stooge.
A profiteer who didn't care about her country, seeking fame by crying in front of the cameras.

And then the calls started, on her cell, and her landline.

One night she saw an obese man in a track suit standing across the street from her house.

She kept her lights out that night, kneeling close to the window, watching him back, trying to decide whether or not to call the police.

He left shortly before daybreak.

She couldn't afford the house in the gated community, but she didn't think there was really any choice after the third brick flew through her front window.

Her father gave her the money he had saved for his grandson's college fund to help with the down payment.

At night she played the message, over and over again. Listening to the sound of her ten-year-old son, sobbing for his mom to come save him.

Listening to the sound of the bullets, and his slow death rattle. She hadn't picked up the phone over her lunch break.

She can't remember if she ignored the call, or truly didn't hear it ringing. It's not that picking up would have changed the outcome, but at least the last sounds he heard would have been his mother telling him she loved him.

The day after the shooting, she had wondered if she would become an alcoholic, but there didn't seem to be an amount of liquor that made her feel drunk anymore.

"They don't look real at all," she said. *"It looks like she doesn't feel anything."*

And she'd agree with the comments about whether her tears looked real or not on the news channel.

She even responded to some of the pictures of child actors they posted. *"No, the eyebrows aren't right,"* she'd add to the thread.

She thought about killing herself, but she didn't want to put her father out any further. So instead, she read through the bile and the hate.

THIS IS FASCINATING. SHE HAS PRINTOUTS OF THE ENTIRE SCHOOL. MINUTES OF THE SHOOTING FROM THE POLICE.

I THINK THIS PIN IS MEANT TO REPRESENT HER SON, ROGER.

QUIET, COLE.

I ALREADY CHECKED ON HER UPSTAIRS. SHE'S OUT.

HM.

SHIT.

WHAT IS IT?

THIS IS BAD. SHE ALREADY GOT HER HANDS ON THE ARTIFACT.

BLACK HAT...

RUBY!

I SAID, QUIET!

SHE'S *BEHIND* YOU!

SIT DOWN.

YEAH. OKAY.

She had found the envelope on her doorstep. She didn't know how long it had been there. She hadn't left the house for days.

She phoned the gatehouse, but the guard seemed exhausted by her before she even got the question out.

She hung up without an answer and took the envelope into her living room. Inside was a small flash drive.

The drive made her feel as if she was going to vomit, though she couldn't say why. There was a large part of her that just wanted to drop it in the garbage disposal.

But instead, she connected it to her laptop, and began to play the video she found inside.

MOMMY...MOMMY, ARE YOU THERE? PLEASE... I WANT TO GO HOME. I WANT TO GO HOME, MOMMY. PLEASE. PLEASE LET ME COME HOME.

AND THEN THERE'S THE GUNFIRE. BLAM BLAM BLAM.

BLAM.

HAHAHAHA...

HE CAN DO IT AGAIN FROM THE TOP, IF YOU WANT. I THINK HE GOT THE CRYING DOWN A BIT BETTER ON THE DRIVE OVER.

OH, DON'T YOU WORRY, MS. TODD. I THINK YOU AND YOUR BOY ARE A NATURAL FIT FOR OUR PROJECT. NOW, ARE YOU COMFORTABLE WITH BEING ON THE NEWS? SPEAKING TO REPORTERS?

YES. I'VE BEEN TAKING IMPROV CLASSES LIKE YOU SUGGESTED. I DIDN'T USE MY REAL NAME. BUT I THINK I'LL BE READY.

She didn't finish the video that first time.

She couldn't bring herself to do it. She just paused it, and stared at herself until the computer died on the kitchen table.

She didn't know if she was going to scream or throw up. When she finally willed herself to move, she played the message from her son, from the shooting.

Every word he said matched the video.

He had been reading a script.

It took her another six hours to admit to herself that, if this video was real, that meant her son was still alive.

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY.

OKAY. YEAH. I'M NOT FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY.

I WANT TO KNOW WHERE MY SON IS.

YOUR SON?

DON'T **BULLSHIT** ME!! I **KNOW** WHO YOU ARE!! I **KNOW** WHO SENT YOU!

WHO DO YOU THINK SENT US?

YOU'RE... YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO CONFUSE ME!

I PROMISE THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M DOING. THAT'S NOT WHAT I CAME HERE TO DO.

I'M NOT GOING TO JUST **LET** YOU KILL ME! NOT WHEN I **KNOW** ROGER IS STILL OUT THERE.

I'M SORRY, MARY. YOUR SON IS DEAD. HE AND FOURTEEN OTHER KIDS WERE SHOT AND KILLED LATE LAST YEAR.

NO! NO, HE ISN'T! NO, HE FUCKING ISN'T!

WE WENT TO THE GRAVEYARD BEFORE WE CAME HERE, MARY. WE EXHUMED THE BODY, TO MAKE SURE... THAT HE WAS STILL THERE.

YOU...**WHAT** DID YOU DO?

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, COLE, YOU NEED TO SHUT THE FUCK UP.

She bought a printer and paper at the local office supply store.

The men on those forums had gathered so much evidence already. Some of it was noise, but some of it started to worm into the back of her mind.

There was a video online of an improv team's class performance down in the city, and she couldn't help but notice that the woman looked remarkably like herself.

If she pulled her hair back and wore glasses, and had a tattoo on her arm ... But all of those things could be faked so easily.

She emailed one of the comedians to ask if they had a name or contact information for the woman in the class, but they didn't. Or wouldn't tell her, at the very least.

She tried to remember the weeks leading up to the shooting, and the day itself.

She had never been able to remember if she ignored her son's call that day, but maybe she was instructed to ignore it. Maybe the message was the proof they had needed her to have.

And had it really been her father who paid off the down payment on this house? Or was this all part of a deal she could scarcely remember?

She started asking in each of the forums where they thought the children were being kept. Did they think the children were safe? The answers only made her feel worse.

One man wrote a long post about how the children were being sold into sexual slavery to Democratic congressmen, and she couldn't let herself even entertain that.

She pictured her boy in some kind of boarding school, under some false name, laughing and playing with friends.

She tried to will that image to the front of her mind at all times, but it was a struggle.

She asked the men on the forum if any crisis actor had ever come forward, and she was told that if anyone ever got close, George Soros would send someone to kill them.

The black car appeared the next day.

SO...WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

WE DESTROY THE VIDEO AND THE FLASH DRIVE. IT GOES BACK TO BEING FICTION. SHE NEVER POSTS IT ONLINE. SHE NEVER COMES FORWARD WITH *"PROOF"* THAT THE SHOOTING DIDN'T HAPPEN.

"CRISIS ACTORS" REMAIN A FRINGE THEORY UNTIL THE NEXT TIME WE NEED TO SHUT ONE OF THESE DOWN.

AND HER SON STAYS DEAD.

THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT THE BOY WOULD BE ALIVE EVEN IF THAT THEORY TOOK HOLD.

HE COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED TO KEEP THE WHOLE OPERATION QUIET. THERE ARE A MILLION DIFFERENT WAYS IT COULD HAVE GONE WRONG.

IT STILL FEELS OFF.

YEAH.

LIKE WE JUST TOOK HIM FROM HER AGAIN. THE CHANCE THAT HE'S STILL OUT THERE. WHAT DOES SHE EVEN DO WITH ALL OF THIS? WILL SHE JUST FORGET?

WE AREN'T THE MEN IN BLACK. THERE AREN'T NEURALYZERS.

SO WHAT HAPPENS TO HER?

HOPEFULLY... SHE SLEEPS FOR A LONG TIME. LONGER THAN SHE HAS IN MONTHS. AND HER BRAIN TREATS ALL OF THIS AS SOME KIND OF DREAM.

AND IF IT DOESN'T?

THEN SHE'LL SPEND THE REST OF HER LIFE BELIEVING THAT AGENTS OF GEORGE SOROS TOOK AWAY THE ONLY PROOF THAT HER SON WAS ALIVE.

BUT WITHOUT THAT PROOF, EVERYONE WILL JUST THINK SHE'S CRAZY.

AND YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT?

THIS ISN'T A CLEAN JOB, COLE. IT'S UGLY. BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE UGLY, AND THEY CAN BELIEVE TERRIBLE, UGLY THINGS.

I SLEEP FINE. ALRIGHT?

YEAH. ALRIGHT.

SO, BLACK HAT. TELL ME ABOUT THEM.

I DON'T KNOW MUCH MORE THAN YOU DO, COLE.

BUT YOU'RE SCARED OF THEM.

IN THE LAST MONTH, THEY HELPED MANIFEST A LITERAL WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD AND SENT THIS WOMAN A VIDEO OF THINGS THAT HAVE NEVER HAPPENED.

YEAH. I'M SCARED.

AND YOU SHOULD BE, TOO.

She knew what had happened before her eyes opened, before she could get herself down the stairs.

Her files were gone. The video was gone. All the work she'd done to connect the dots had been undone. Covered up.

She went to one of the forums, and began to type. Her fingers ached against the keyboard as she pounded sentences away, in red-faced fury.

She wrote that she had proof, but mysterious government agents had come into her house and taken it all away from her.

Her son was out there, somewhere, and the government was hiding him from her. He was still alive. She was a liar and she should go to jail, but her son should have his life back.

She caught her reflection in a mirror. She saw herself red-faced, and shaking. And mad.

And she saw the gun on the table. And the sight of it made her sick.

She read the post again, with clearer eyes, and started retching. She knew how unhinged she sounded.

She screamed in her empty home, unsure if she was making any noise.

Nobody heard her.

CHAPTER 4

FUCK. I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WANT TO START.
TALK TO ME, DAN.
DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT WE DO? NOT IN THE PRACTICAL SENSE. THE BIG PICTURE OF WHAT WE DO AS MEMBERS OF THE PRESS.
WE PUT OUT A DAILY NEWSPAPER THAT INFORMS MILLIONS--
NO. THAT'S INCIDENTAL. THAT'S JUST, FUCK, I DON'T KNOW... THE LATEST VERSION OF A THING THAT HAS BEEN GROWING LIKE A TUMOR FOR THE LAST FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.
SINCE GUTENBERG BUILT HIS PRINTING PRESS. SINCE INFORMATION BECAME SOMETHING YOU COULD SELL ON THE STREET TO ANYONE WHO COULD READ IT.
I DON'T KNOW. THEY STARTED ARRIVING A FEW MONTHS AGO.
BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THEY'RE THE REASON WE'RE BEING LISTENED TO RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE SCARING ME, DAN.
I KNOW.
YOU'VE NEVER DROPPED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH LIKE THIS BEFORE.
WE'VE PUT ALL THESE AIRS ON IT. THE IDEA THAT WE'RE THIS NOBLE FOURTH ESTATE, A CHECK ON THE POWERFUL AND THE NOT-POWERFUL ALL AT ONCE.
BUT YOU KNOW DAMN WELL THAT WE'RE JUST FULL OF SHIT. WE'VE CREATED ALL THESE RULES AND ETHICS TO MASK WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN.
PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY FOR INFORMATION. THEY ARE RAVENOUS FOR IT, AND IT'S OUR JOB TO KEEP THEM FED.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT INFORMATION IT IS, AS LONG AS WE GOT TO IT FIRST. WE'RE NOT THIS... VALIANT INSTITUTION.
I KNOW.
OUR PAPER IS OWNED BY THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD, FOR GOD'S SAKE. HOW IS IT ANY DIFFERENT THAN IT WAS A CENTURY AGO WITH HEARST AND PULITZER?!
INFORMATION CAN BE SO FUCKING DANGEROUS. IT CAN DESTROY LIVES AND DESTABILIZE GOVERNMENTS, AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT WE WIELD IT LIKE IDIOT CHILDREN.
RATHER THAN TREAT IT LIKE WHAT IT IS. A WEAPON.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHEN DID YOU SWITCH APARTMENTS?
OF COURSE YOU DO. YOU'RE A CYNICAL BASTARD.
I DON'T APPRECIATE YOUR TONE.
DON'T GIVE ME THIS... FUCK. THIS PLAY-ACTING. I NEED YOU TO STOP SAYING WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY AND ACTUALLY LISTEN TO ME.
I NEED YOU TO LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE HERE WITH CLEAN EYES AND A CLEAR HEAD SO YOU CAN HELP ME MAKE A DECISION.
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ABOUT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
NONE OF THAT MATTERS, ROBBIE. ALL OF THAT IS JUST NOISE. I DID WHAT I THOUGHT I HAD TO, TO GET THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON ALL OF THIS... IT DIDN'T WORK. THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU.
I NEED TO TELL YOU A STORY THAT NEVER HAPPENED. THAT COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED.
BY THE ETHICS OF OUR PAPER, AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRESS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE PUBLISH THIS STORY.
BUT WE CAN'T.
WHAT IS THIS SYMBOL... THIS HAT?

I WANT A BETTER SHOT...HE KEEPS PACING AROUND LIKE A MANIAC..

I DON'T HAVE A DRONE IN THERE, LEE. THAT'S NOT HOW THIS WORKS.

WHAT FUCKING USE ARE THESE EXPENSIVE FUCKING TOYS IF THEY DON'T FUCKING WORK?

THEY **DO** WORK. YOU'RE JUST GRUMPY YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND **HOW** THEY WORK.

BACK IN THE DAY, WE USED **TAPE.**

DUCT TAPE.

IT WASN'T DUCT TAPE. IT WAS MAGNETIC TAPE.

LIKE A REFRIGERATOR MAGNET. GOT IT.

NO!

NOT LIKE A FUCKING—

HMPH. YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO GET ME WORKED UP.

YEAH. I GET FIFTY BUCKS FROM HUNKY EVERY TIME I GET YOU TO YELL AT ME.

HOW ABOUT YOU GIVE ME A CUT OF THE ACTION, AND I CAN PUT ON A WHOLE SHOW. THROBBING VEIN ON THE FOREHEAD AND EVERYTHING.

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR THROBBING VEINS, LEE.

HEY! THAT WASN'T WHAT I—

OH. FUCK.

YEAH. I'M GONNA BUY A CAR.

OOF.

UH, OKAY, I HAVE COFFEES.

I SPILLED A LITTLE ON MYSELF ON THE WAY UP. AND AGAIN. RIGHT THEN. BUT THEY'RE MOSTLY WHERE THEY SHOULD BE. IN THEIR CUPS.

THE GUY THOUGHT I WAS JOKING WHEN I ASKED FOR SIX SHOTS OF ESPRESSO WITH A SPLASH OF COFFEE.

MAMA NEEDS HER GASOLINE.

THIS PLACE IS INCREDIBLE. DO YOU LIVE HERE, DIRECTOR OSWALD?

DON'T BE STUPID. I LIVE SOMEWHERE NICE. NOT IN THE CITY.

AND DON'T DO THAT. JUST CALL ME LEE. THANKS FOR THE PICK-ME-UP. YOU CAN GO NOW.

GO?

LOOK. I'M NOT YOUR **INTERN**...

I HEAR YOU WERE CRYING IN THE FUCKING BASEMENT OVER SOME FAIRY TALE YOU COOKED UP AS A KID. AND THAT YOU ALMOST BUNGLED UP THE WHOLE SITUATION IN CONNECTICUT.

I NEEDED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE HALFWAY WORTH A DAMN.

YOU DIDN'T FUCK UP THE COFFEE. SO, AT LEAST YOU HAVE THAT GOING FOR YOU.

TRY TO SPILL LESS OF IT ON YOURSELF NEXT TIME, AND I'LL CONSIDER PUTTING YOU ON ANOTHER FIELD JOB.

SIR...

JUST CALL ME LEE.

LEE.

YOU TOLD ME WHEN YOU HIRED ME THAT YOU WOULD LET ME ASK QUESTIONS.

OH, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD. YOUR GENERATION ARE A BUNCH OF SENSITIVE LITTLE FUCKING **BABIES**, AREN'T YOU?

I WANT TO BE ABLE TO START INVESTIGATING THE STAR-FACED MAN FULL-TIME. I WANT TO FIND HIM, AND ELIMINATE HIM BEFORE HE CAN HURT MORE CHILDREN.

ALL THESE THINGS ARE CONNECTED. YOU GET THAT, RIGHT?

THE FICTIONAL WOMAN WITH NO EYES. YOUR STAR-FACED MAN. THE BLACK HAT. THERE ARE FORCES OUT THERE WITH THEIR OWN AGENDA. WE ARE FIGHTING THAT AGENDA.

LEE...

YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I BROUGHT YOU HERE FOR COFFEE, DID YOU?

IF YOU WERE PAYING ATTENTION YOU'D KNOW THAT I'M ALREADY ANSWERING THOSE QUESTIONS.

NOW SHUT UP AND **LISTEN.**

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE DO, COLE. WHAT WE COMBAT. THE MOST DANGEROUS THING IN THE WORLD IS A SIMPLE STORY.

THAT'S WHAT KEEPS MOST CONSPIRACIES FROM CATCHING ON WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC--THEY ARE TOO CONVOLUTED. CONVOLUTION IS OUR FRIEND.

IT HELPS FRACTURE BELIEF SO IT DOESN'T COALESCE IN ANY ONE STABLE FORM AND BECOME TRUTH.

LIKE WHO KILLED JFK.

THAT'S RIGHT. EXACTLY LIKE THAT. EVEN WHEN A MAJORITY BELIEVES THAT THERE WAS A CONSPIRACY, NOBODY CAN AGREE WHICH ONE WINS OUT.

THE MOB. THE CIA. THE CUBANS. A LONE GUNMAN. A MAGIC BULLET. THERE'S NO ONE ANSWER. NO FIRM BELIEF. JUST A BELIEF THAT THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY THAN THEY KNOW.

AND FUCK YOU VERY MUCH, BY THE WAY.

BUT OCCASIONALLY, A NARRATIVE HITS A NERVE, AND IT SPREADS. USUALLY BECAUSE THE GENERAL POPULACE IS UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT SOMETHING.

LET'S SAY, FOR INSTANCE--AND I'M JUST PULLING THIS OUT OF MY ASS--LET'S SAY THEY'RE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF A BLACK PRESIDENT.

BARACK OBAMA CONTRADICTS THE IMAGE THEY HAVE IN THEIR HEAD FOR WHAT A PRESIDENT LOOKS LIKE AND SOUNDS LIKE, AND IT UNSETTLES THEM ON A SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL.

AND THEN SOMEBODY PRESENTS AN **ANSWER** TO WHY THEY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. HE'S NOT **FROM** HERE. HE WASN'T BORN IN THIS COUNTRY, HE WAS BORN IN **KENYA.**

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT YOU OR I CAN DISPROVE THAT THEORY SIX WAYS TO SUNDAY.

THERE'S A PART OF THEIR BRAINS THAT FEELS RELIEVED, BECAUSE THAT LIE GIVES THEM A SENSE OF **ORDER.**

THEY AREN'T BAD PEOPLE FOR FEELING UNSETTLED BY A BLACK PRESIDENT. THEY AREN'T **RACIST.** THEY'RE JUST SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THROUGH THE **RUSE.**

AND THAT'S WHEN THINGS GET VERY DANGEROUS FOR US.

BECAUSE THEY START BUILDING A WHOLE NEW TRUTH ON THE SIMPLE IDEA THAT OBAMA IS KENYAN. THEY START ASKING WHO WOULD ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN AND WHAT THEY **REALLY** WANT.

EXACTLY.

SIX MONTHS AGO, THE REPORTER IN THAT APARTMENT WAS SENT A CLASSIFIED DOCUMENT SIGNED BY CIA DIRECTOR ALLEN DULLES IN 1961, ORDERING THE DESTRUCTION OF KENYAN BIRTH RECORDS FOR A BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II, AND THE CREATION OF NEW BIRTH RECORDS IN HAWAII.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

I'M NOT SAYING **ANYTHING**, ROBBIE.

WHO SENT YOU THIS?

ALL I HAVE IS THE SYMBOL. THE LITTLE BLACK HAT.

I'M NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND LISTEN TO DERANGED CONSPIRACY THEORIES.

YES, YOU ARE. YOU **HAVE** TO. I NEED YOU TO SEE THE FULL PICTURE HERE.

22:00036568

I THOUGHT DULLES WAS FIRED IN '61, AFTER THE BAY OF PIGS.

NOT UNTIL NOVEMBER, A FEW MONTHS AFTER THIS DOCUMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNED.

YOU SAID THIS WAS THE FIRST ENVELOPE. THE FIRST OF HOW MANY?

TWELVE.

THE FIRST ENVELOPE IS THE ORDER TO CHANGE OBAMA'S BIRTH LOCATION. AUGUST 1961.

THE SECOND IS THE RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN DULLES AND GEORGE H. W. BUSH IN HOUSTON, 1962, SHORTLY BEFORE BUSH RUNS FOR POLITICAL OFFICE THE FIRST TIME.

THE THIRD IS A REQUEST BY DULLES TO PULL A YOUNG TEENAGER NAMED WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON FROM HIS WHITE HOUSE TRIP WITH BOYS NATION. JULY 1963.

THE FOURTH CONTAINS MINUTES FROM THE WARREN COMMISSION'S FIRST MEETING, DECEMBER 1963, ESTABLISHING THE CREATION OF A DEEP STATE THAT WOULD RULE THE GOVERNMENT, AND DECIDE WHICH PUPPETS TO PUT IN FRONT OF THE CAMERAS.

THIS ONE ALSO STATES THAT THE REMAINING KENNEDY FAMILY MEMBERS WOULD BE DEALT WITH. THAT THEY WERE *"A FAILED EXPERIMENT"* THAT WOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

THE FIFTH IS COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN DULLES AND THE LEADER OF AN ISLAMIST MADRASSA IN INDONESIA, REGARDING THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG BARACK OBAMA IN 1967.

THE SIXTH OUTLINES PLANS FOR THE 1970S FROM DULLES' DEATH BED IN 1969. HE WANTED TO RESHAPE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY BY RUNNING IT INTO THE GROUND, AND STAMP OUT ANY ANTI-WAR ELEMENTS BY THE END OF THE DECADE, TO PREPARE IT FOR A RESURGENCE IN ROUGHLY TWO DECADES WITH THEIR CHOSEN CANDIDATE.

HE WANTED HIS HAND-PICKED REPUBLICAN IN THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION, AND EITHER IN THE PRESIDENT OR VICE-PRESIDENT SLOT BY 1980.

THE SEVENTH IS A DEBRIEFING WITH CIA ASSET JEFFREY EPSTEIN, IN SAUDI ARABIA, REGARDING HIM RETURNING TO WASHINGTON TO THROW A PARTY FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENT AND OTHER PROMINENT POLITICIANS. 1983.

THE EIGHTH IS A DIRECTIVE FROM A MEMBER OF THE DEEP STATE COMMANDING PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH TO SHIFT GEARS AND BEGIN CREATING A POST-SOVIET THREAT FOR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN THE MIDDLE EAST. 1990.

THE NINTH IS THE KILL ORDER FOR VINCE FOSTER AFTER HE THREATENED TO REVEAL A DECADENT PARTY WITH THE CLINTONS AND EPSTEIN, AND THE SATANIC ACTS PERFORMED THERE. 1993.

THE TENTH IS A DETAILED PROPOSAL FOR AN ATTACK ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND PENTAGON, FRAMING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS. THE PROPOSAL IS DATED 1999.

THE ELEVENTH HAS MINUTES OF A BACK-ROOM DEAL BETWEEN HILLARY CLINTON, BARACK OBAMA, AND UNNAMED MEMBERS OF THE DEEP STATE TO ALLOW OBAMA TO TAKE THE PRESIDENCY, IF HILLARY CAN HAVE IT AFTER HIM. 2008.

THE TWELFTH IS THE CONFESSION OF JEFFREY EPSTEIN FROM THE DAY BEFORE HIS APPARENT SUICIDE. 2020.

SO...THOSE ARE THE PIECES, AND YOU AND I KNOW THEY AREN'T TRUE. BUT TELL ME THE FAIRY TALE. WEAVE IT ALL TOGETHER. PRETEND.

"ONCE UPON A TIME..."

SO, THE THEORY WOULD REST ON THE IDEA THAT PRESIDENTS AREN'T ELECTED, THEY ARE **CHOSEN.** AND WITH DULLES IN THE LEAD, THAT FINGERS THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

THE THEORY STARTS WITH THE MOTHER OF ALL CONSPIRACIES. THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX KILLED JFK FOR NOT BEING PLIABLE ENOUGH, AND THEN MADE SURE HIS SUCCESSORS **WOULD** BE.

THE CLINTONS AND THE BUSHES WERE PUPPETS OF THE DEEP STATE, PLACATED BY A SATANIC PEDOPHILE RING CONTROLLED BY JEFFREY EPSTEIN AND THE CIA.

THEY WERE PUSHED TO ENGINEER THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM BY STAGING 9/11, TO START THE FOREVER WARS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AS A REPLACEMENT FOR THE COLD WAR.

ALL THE WHILE EXPANDING TRADE, COLONIZING THE ENTIRE PLANET WITH AMERICAN MONEY AND MILITARY MIGHT—AND KILLING ANYONE WHO GETS TOO CLOSE TO THE TRUTH OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER, AND ITS SECRET LEADERS.

OBAMA IS A KIND OF STRANGE ANTICHRIST FIGURE IN THIS MYTHOLOGY.

I MEAN, THE OBVIOUS IMPLICATION IS THAT DULLES WANTED OBAMA ELECTED PRESIDENT, THAT HE WAS PICKED FROM BIRTH TO ASSUME THE JOB, AND THEN RAISED AS A SECRET MUSLIM EXTREMIST...

MY GUESS, IF I READ THOSE DOCUMENTS, THEY'D SAY THAT OBAMA AND DULLES' GOAL WAS TO UNDERMINE AMERICAN VALUES AND REPLACE THEM WITH NEW GLOBALIST IDEALS TO HELP FURTHER AMERICAN MILITARY DOMINANCE OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.

ALL OF THIS CREATES A FEASIBLE BACKSTORY FOR THE STANDARD QANON CONSPIRACY. THE IDEA THAT PRESIDENT TRUMP WAS WAGING A SECRET WAR WITH A DEEP STATE HE SOUGHT TO EXPOSE BY LOCKING UP KEY PLAYERS IN THE DEMOCRATS' PEDOPHILE RINGS.

RIGHT. NOW THE TRICK IS NOT TO GET CAUGHT IN THE DETAILS. YOU START PULLING THREADS AND WE'LL GET NAZIS AND REPTILIANS AND THE ROTHSCHILDS PULLED INTO THIS MESS.

LOOK AT THE **BIG PICTURE.** WHAT **PURPOSE** DOES THIS STORY SERVE?

IT'S CREATING A UNIFIED HISTORY OF AMERICAN CONSPIRACY THEORIES, AND TYING THEM ALL TO THE MOST RECENT AND MOST DANGEROUS ONE.

TO WHAT END?

...

SEE, **THIS** IS THE WORK, KID. THIS IS HOW YOU NEED TO THINK. DON'T GET CAUGHT ON THE STORY ITSELF, THINK ABOUT HOW THE STORY IS BEING COLLECTED AND DELIVERED, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE.

BLACK HAT DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT WHETHER JOE PUBLIC BELIEVES THAT THE CLINTONS WERE HAVING SEX WITH CHILDREN IN A PIZZA SHOP, OR THAT DUBYA BROUGHT DOWN THOSE TOWERS.

WHAT DOES IT **WANT** PEOPLE TO BELIEVE?

THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN LYING ABOUT EVERYTHING FOR SIXTY YEARS. THAT OUR HISTORY IS ALL FICTION.

AND WHO **WROTE** THAT FICTION?

...

BLACK HAT IS TRYING TO EXPOSE THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

I NEED YOU TO TELL ME RIGHT NOW THAT YOU DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF THIS, DAN.

THERE WERE DAYS WHERE I GOT SWEPT UP IN IT...EACH OF THESE PIECES OF INFORMATION LEADS TO MORE RABBIT HOLES, AND IT'S SO EASY TO HEAD DOWN ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

BUT THAT'S WHAT BOTHERED ME. ALL OF THESE MESSY STORIES FIT TOGETHER TOO NEATLY.

SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO PLAY ME. USE ME.

WHEN I REALIZED THAT, I STOPPED TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS INSIDE THOSE DOCUMENTS, AND I STARTED TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO WAS TRYING TO PLAY ME.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

THERE ARE ABOUT A HUNDRED CAMERAS AND MICROPHONES IN THIS ROOM. FROM EVERY ANGLE, WE'RE BEING WATCHED, AND PROBABLY RECORDED.

YOU REALIZE THAT SOUNDS AS CRAZY AS ANY ONE OF THOSE DOCUMENTS, DON'T YOU?

YEAH, I DO.

WHEN I TOLD YOU I HAD A STORY TO RUN, IT WASN'T THE ONES IN ALL THESE FOLDERS. IT'S THE ONE THAT ALL THESE FOLDERS **IMPLY.**

THIS...**THIS** IS THE STUFF WHERE I CAN'T TELL IF I'M NUTS OR NOT. BUT I THINK... THERE IS SOMEBODY TRYING TO PUT ALL OF THESE THEORIES IN THE WORLD.

AND THEN THERE'S SOMEBODY **ELSE** WATCHING ME, MAKING SURE I DON'T SPREAD A GODDAMN WORD.

I'M JUST THE...I DON'T KNOW. I'M THE DELIVERY MECHANISM. THE BLANK PAGE THEY'RE USING TO SEND MESSAGES BACK AND FORTH.

THAT **FIGHT** IS THE STORY.

SOMEONE IS TRYING TO WRITE A NEW HISTORY, AND SOMEONE ELSE IS TRYING TO STOP THEM FROM WRITING IT, AND I THINK IT'S BEEN HAPPENING FOR A LONG TIME.

BUT I KNOW THAT IF WE TRIED TO OUT THEM, THESE BITS OF EVIDENCE WOULD GET OUT INTO THE WILD, AND PEOPLE WOULD FIND THEM AND THEY'D GROW IN POWER.

AND THAT WOULD SELL A HELL OF A LOT OF NEWSPAPERS, AS WE WENT DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE, BUT EVEN BY REPORTING ALL OF IT AS FALSE, WE'D BE PUTTING IT IN THE WORLD, AND MAKING IT **REAL.**

SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

I WANT TO TALK TO THEM. I WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH SO I CAN GO TO SLEEP AT NIGHT, AND THEN I WANT TO PUT THIS ALL AWAY AND NEVER THINK ABOUT IT AGAIN.

HOW DO YOU PLAN ON DOING THAT?

WELL. WHOEVER IT IS, THEY'RE IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

SHIT.

THIS ACTUALLY MAKES THINGS A BIT EASIER FOR US.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

I WANTED YOU TO BE HERE TO HELP PUT THIS ONE TO BED. I NEED YOU TO START THINKING BIGGER, AND I NEED YOU TO PROVE THAT YOU HAVE THE BALLS TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.

WAIT...

YOU'RE GOING TO LET THEM INTO THE ROOM, AND THEN YOU'RE GOING TO SHOOT EACH OF THEM IN THE HEAD.

WHAT?!

SON, YOU KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THIS KNOWLEDGE CAN BE. IMAGINE TRYING TO DO OUR JOB WHEN THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S BELIEF IN THE ORGANIZATION STARTS SHAPING WHAT WE DO.

I'VE BEEN IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT BEFORE. IT GETS UGLY FAST. WE'RE MUCH, MUCH BETTER OFF NOT EXISTING.

BUT HE SAID HE WANTS TO PUT IT TO SLEEP...

THE TRUTH DOESN'T GO TO SLEEP, COLE. HE LEARNS ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT, AND HE'LL SEE US IN EVERY SHADOW IN WASHINGTON.

AND THEN ONE DAY HE GETS DRUNK IN A BAR, AND TELLS PEOPLE THAT WE TOOK HIS EVIDENCE OF A WHOLE SECRET HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY, AND THAT STARTS TO SPREAD ON ITS OWN.

AND EVERYTHING STARTS TO UNRAVEL AROUND US. BLACK HAT WINS, AND THEY GET THEIR FLAT EARTHS AND PEDOPHILE RINGS.

IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT, COLE?

JESUS.

YOU PROVE YOU CAN HANDLE THIS, AND I'LL LET YOU CHASE YOUR STAR-FACED MONSTER, AND ALL THE OTHER HORRIBLE THINGS YOU'LL FIND ALONG THE WAY.

KNOCK KNOCK

SHIT.

K/K

BUT IT'S UP TO YOU. I DON'T EXIST. IT'LL JUST BE YOU AND THEM IN THE ROOM.

HELLO?

UH...HI. THIS IS DANIEL CLAY. I'M A REPORTER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST. MY EDITOR AND I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

YEAH... PLEASE COME W.

IT'S NICE TO KNOW I WASN'T JUST BEING PARANOID.

I'M SURE.

WHAT ARE YOU? NSA? CIA?

NO. SOMETHING ELSE.

LOOK...AT THE END OF THE DAY, I AGREE WITH YOU GUYS. I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS STORY TO RUN.

I DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU **ARE**...I JUST WANT TO KNOW...

YOU'RE THE GOOD GUYS, RIGHT?

I THINK SO.

OH.

BANG

BANG

CHAPTER 5

Action: failed
Status: 5.0.0
Diagnostic-Code: X-Postfix; Name service error
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
17 Dec 02
FOR JTF-GTMO/J2

DENVER
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT.

I'M IN.

OKAY, RUBY. THIS IS DOC. JUST GETTING UP TO SPEED... TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.

WHERE'S COLE? HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE IN MY EAR.

THE DIRECTOR CALLED HIM IN.

HRM.

ARE YOU WEARING THE BLUETOOTH AGAIN?

YES, DOC.

YOU KNOW... YOU SHOULDN'T USE THOSE HEADPHONES. YOU SHOULD BE PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM ALL WIRELESS COMMUNICATION.

NOT REALLY POSSIBLE IN THIS DAY AND AGE...

CONSIDER YOUR ENEMIES, RUBY. THE ELECTRIC SIGNALS IN YOUR BRAIN CAN BE MANIPULATED...

YOU'RE READING TOO MANY OF YOUR OWN FILES. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO REPORT YOU TO LEE IF YOU KEEP SAYING THIS STUFF.

ALL YOU KIDS WONDER WHY THE WORLD WENT SIDEWAYS WHILE YOU'RE BEAMING THE ENTIRE INTERNET THROUGH YOUR BODY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY.

DOC.

THIS PLACE LOOKS EMPTY.

FALSE LEAD, THEN?

NO. I THINK THIS IS WHERE ALL THE DOSSIERS WERE MADE FOR BLACK HAT. BUT THEY SAW US COMING AND CLEARED OUT.

Don't worry. We made videosssss...

REPTILIAN.

YEAH.

DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, RUBY. HE'S A **FICTION**...BLACK HAT LEFT HIM HERE TO TOY WITH YOU. THEY WANT YOU TO CLEAN UP THEIR LOOSE END.

Don't lisssten. We're underneath your cities...we hide in your human skin...

NO, YOU AREN'T. AND NO, YOU DON'T.

THEY SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MANIFEST SO MANY OF THESE FUCKERS OUT OF SUCH A FRINGE THEORY. THEY SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO **ANY** OF THIS.

SHIT.

WHAT IS IT?

IT'S NOT **EMPTY.** THERE'S BEEN A **MASSACRE** IN HERE.

AND THEY LEFT A MESSAGE.

I WANT TO...THANK YOU ALL FOR THE GOOD WORK YOU'VE DONE OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS. YOU AND YOUR DEPARTMENT HAVE REALLY KEPT ME ON MY TOES.

BUT IT'S TOO LATE. WE'VE ALREADY DONE SO MUCH TO HELP TIP THE BALANCE AND DELIVER A NEW GREAT AWAKENING FOR THIS COUNTRY AND THE WORLD.

THIS IS A DEAD END.

HEHEHE HEHEHE.

AND TRUST US. WE KNOW DEAD.

JESUS.

THAT BAD?

THEY PURGED THE FACILITY. KILLED THEIR OWN STAFF, **JUST** BECAUSE THEY KNEW WE WERE COMING.

AND THEY FILMED IT SO WE COULD **WATCH.**

THEY'RE TRYING TO CONTROL THEIR OWN DEFINITION. TEXTBOOK MOVE IN OUR FIELD...

THERE'S MORE.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE?

YOU SAID THE DIRECTOR CALLED COLE IN?

CHAPTER FIVE The Shadow Play

I NEED TO TALK TO HIM. FAST.

COLE TURNER

YOU CAN GO HOME. WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO WILL CLEAN THIS UP.

OKAY.

TAKE A FEW DAYS.

OKAY.

WHEN YOU COME BACK, WE'LL TALK ABOUT YOUR STAR-FACED MAN.

YEAH.

YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, COLE.

SURE.

COLE?

HI.

WHAT'S WRONG?

MATTY... YOU KNOW I CAN'T TELL YOU.

OKAY, SHIT.

WHAT?

I WAS CALLING YOU BECAUSE THE OTHER COPY EDITORS DRAGGED ME OUT TO COLUMBIA HEIGHTS TO GET SHIT-FACED. IT'S SOMEBODY'S BIRTHDAY. I WAS GOING TO TRY TO GET YOU TO COME OUT, TOO.

SORRY. NOT TONIGHT.

WASHINGTON, DC.

DO YOU WANT ME TO COME HOME?

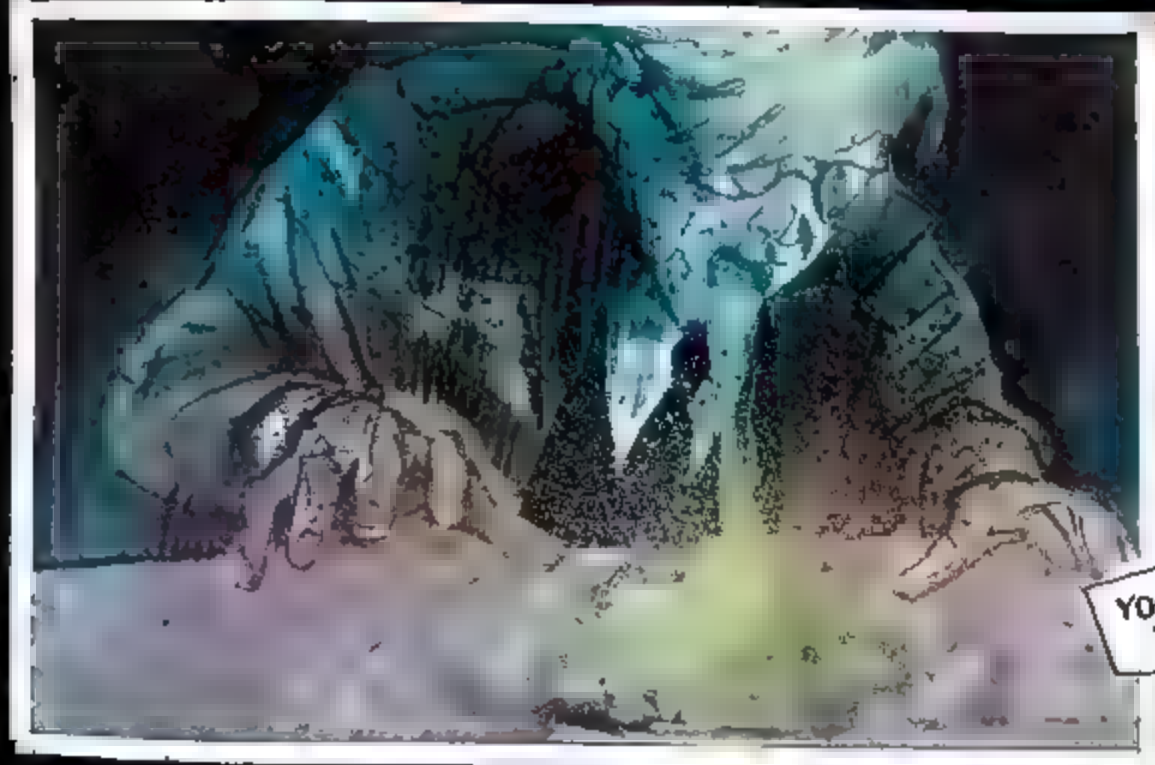
NO. I THINK IT'LL BE GOOD IF I CAN CLEAR MY HEAD A BIT.

I SWEAR, I'LL TURN AROUND AND COME HOME RIGHT NOW.

PLEASE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT.

OKAY. I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU, TOO.



YOU'RE COLE TURNER.

WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU IN MY APARTMENT?

MY NAME IS MARTIN BARKER.

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN SOMETHING TO ME?

NO. I'M JUST BEING POLITE.

I NEED YOU TO TELL ME WHO YOU ARE, AND WHY I SHOULDN'T CALL THE POLICE RIGHT NOW.

THE POLICE. CUTE.

YOUR BOSS JUST CALLS ME *"THAT BLACK HAT FUCKER,"* WHICH WOULD HURT MY FEELINGS IF I DIDN'T KIND OF GET OFF ON IT. THAT ENOUGH FOR YOU TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER?

YOU... RUN BLACK HAT.

BINGO. NOW, SIT DOWN. I WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOU.

THERE IS **NOTHING** I WOULD HAVE TO SAY TO YOU ON MY BEST DAY, AND THIS IS **NOT** MY BEST DAY.

NO, COLE. THIS IS THE **PERFECT** DAY. I KNOW WHERE ALL YOUR PEOPLE ARE, AND THEY AREN'T ANYWHERE CLOSE TO HERE.

NOBODY IS LISTENING. I'VE BLACKED OUT ALL OF YOUR DEVICES. WE DON'T EXIST RIGHT NOW, EXCEPT TO EACH OTHER.

THAT MEANS I CAN SPEAK THE TRUTH.

THE TRUTH? YOU'RE FUCKING JOKING.

I'VE SEEN THE BULLSHIT YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET PEOPLE TO BELIEVE.

OH, COLE. PLEASE. WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET A LITTLE BIT OF TIME TOGETHER, AND YOU'RE GOING TO NEED TO BE MUCH SMARTER THAN THAT.

I JUST...I JUST SAW THE FILES YOU WERE TRYING TO SEED TO THAT REPORTER...

YOU WANTED PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN SOME FUCKED-UP QANON—

HEY. SETTLE DOWN NOW.

I DON'T **WANT** PEOPLE TO BELIEVE ANYTHING.

THAT'S LESSON NUMBER ONE ABOUT BLACK HAT, OKAY? THAT'S THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MY GUYS AND YOUR GUYS.

I DIDN'T INVENT ANYTHING. I TOOK WHAT PEOPLE ALREADY BELIEVED AND GAVE IT A PLATFORM.

SIX PERCENT OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THE MOON LANDING WAS FAKED. MORE THAN THAT BELIEVE THAT BARACK OBAMA WAS BORN IN KENYA.

WHY DON'T THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO BELIEVE WHAT THEY WANT TO BELIEVE?

BECAUSE THOSE THINGS AREN'T TRUE.

BUT HERE'S THE THING, YOUNG PADAWAN. YOU'VE BEEN LET IN ON THE BIGGEST SECRET IN THE WORLD. YOU KNOW THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE TRUTH, MAJORITY RULES.

WHY SHOULDN'T THE MAJORITY RULE, COLE?

BECAUSE...IT'S... IT'S IRRESPONSIBLE. PEOPLE GET HURT.

OH YEAH? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE I HURT SINCE YOU JOINED THE DEPARTMENT? BECAUSE BY MY MATH, YOUR SIDE HAS RACKED UP QUITE THE LITTLE BODY COUNT.

THEY EVEN GOT YOU IN ON IT, AND YOU'RE MADDER RIGHT NOW THAT YOU CAN'T GO CRYING INTO YOUR PILLOW THAN YOU ARE THAT I'M SITTING HERE.

NO, I'M PRETTY MAD YOU'RE SITTING THERE.

OKAY, SO YOUR DEPARTMENT IS IN THE MORAL RIGHT, THEN. MY BAD. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

WE SHOULD JUST KILL EVERYONE WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE THE RIGHT THINGS? IT'S A NICE IDEA. IT EVEN WORKS FOR A BIT.

YOU SHOULD ASK SOME OF THE OLD FOGIES ON YOUR SIDE ABOUT THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPART BACK IN THE DAY.

WHAT THE 20TH CENTURY WOULD LOOK LIKE NOW, IF THE BERLIN WALL CAME DOWN THE OTHER WAY AROUND. BOY, I'M TELLING YOU.

LOOK, COLE. I'M A STUDENT OF HISTORY. I HAVE TO BE, IN THIS LUNATIC WORLD, BUT I'M GOING DOWN A RABBIT HOLE.

I JUST CAME HERE TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND A FEW TRUE THINGS.

THE FIRST TRUTH...

THIS GAME WE'RE PLAYING. IT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR A LONG FUCKING TIME THAT'S THE ONE **REAL** CONSPIRACY OUT THERE. THE ACTUAL SECRET HISTORY OF OUR WORLD.

THERE HAVE BEEN PLAYERS IN EVERY GREAT CIVILIZATION WHO HAVE KNOWN THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY, AND WHO HAVE TRIED TO PLAY THE PEOPLE TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES.

YOUR SIDE HAS THE HARD COPY HISTORIES. THEY STOLE THEM OUT OF EUROPE IN WW2 AND USED THEM TO CREATE THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

THE SECOND TRUTH...

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH WAS **NOT** FORMED TO UPHOLD OUR BETTER FUCKING ANGELS OR ANY STUPID GODDAMN THING LIKE THAT.

IT WAS FORMED TO RESHAPE THE POSTWAR WORLD WITH AMERICA AT ITS CENTER, RATHER THAN ALL THE IMPERIAL POWERS OF THE PREVIOUS TWO HUNDRED YEARS.

THE PEOPLE WHO CONTROL THE TRUTH CONTROL THE WORLD. I BELIEVE THE AMERICANS WHO BUILT YOUR DEPARTMENT DID IT WITH A GOOD DREAM IN THEIR HEARTS. AN ADMIRABLE DREAM, IF NOT A REALISTIC ONE.

BUT HERE'S THE THIRD TRUTH, COLE..

THAT WHOLE FUCKING DREAM STARTED TO FALL APART ON NOVEMBER 22ND, 1963.

WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ANY OF THIS?

YOU'RE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THIS FIGHT, KID.

YOU ARE WORKING WITH THE BAD GUYS, TRYING TO KEEP A STRANGLEHOLD ON THE TRUTH IN THE NAME OF A DREAM THAT DIED SIXTY YEARS AGO.

AND I KNOW YOU FEEL IT. YOU JUST SHOT AND KILLED TWO PEOPLE, COLE, AND I CAN SEE YOU'RE STILL IN SHOCK. THAT'S SENSIBLE.

THAT'S JUST FUCKING HUMAN.

YOU KNOW, THAT NICE HUSBAND OF YOURS. HE'S OUT WITH HIS WORK FRIENDS RIGHT NOW.

HE MIGHT EVEN BE OUT LATE ENOUGH TO GET THE NEWS THAT AN EDITOR AND A WRITER FROM HIS PAPER JUST GOT ASSASSINATED.

YOU REALIZE YOU'RE GOING TO BE INVITED TO THE FUNERAL, RIGHT? DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT IN YOU TO KEEP LYING TO HIM--FIND THE RIGHT EXCUSES TO SKIP THE SERVICE?

YOU CAN'T BUILD THINGS ON A LIE.

NOW, YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE ANY OF THIS, AND THAT'S OKAY. IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME, BUT I'M GOING TO HELP YOU CONNECT A DOT REAL QUICK.

FLASHBACK TO THE LATE '70s, EARLY '80s. THE REAL START OF YOUR BOSS LEE'S REIGN OVER THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH. THE COUNTRY'S GETTING ALL NOSTALGIC FOR THAT KIND OF FULL-ON, 1950s-STYLE POSTWAR AMERICANA.

AND THE DEPARTMENT IS GETTING NOSTALGIC IN ITS OWN WAY FOR THE POWER IT USED TO WIELD OVER THE AMERICAN DREAM. ONLY TROUBLE IS THEY WEEDED OUT ALL THE COMMIES A FEW DECADES EARLIER.

BUT LEE KNOWS THAT REAGAN'S NOT GOING TO GET HIS SHINING CITY ON THE HILL WITHOUT SOME DEVILS HIDING IN THE SHADOWS.

YOU'RE LYING.

I HAVEN'T SAID ONE LIE TO YOU YET, AND YOU KNOW IT.

THE SATANIC PANIC WAS JUST THE NEWER, WEIRDER TAKE ON THE OLD RED SCARE, BUT THIS TIME THE RED CAME WITH POINTY HORNS AND A PITCHFORK.

I'M NOT SAYING THEY COOKED IT UP, BUT THEY HELPED IT SPREAD...

FROM A COUPLE OF PAPERBACK BOOKS TO SOME PRESCHOOLS, ALL THE WAY TO LITTLE COLE TURNER IN WISCONSIN, AND HIS WONDERFUL IMAGINATION.

AND WHAT CAME OUT OF IT.

HHHHH, COLE...

OH, I'M HUNNNNNGRY.

I JUSSST CAME FROM A PIZZA PARTY, BUT I'M STILL HUNNNNGRY. HEHEHEHEHE.

NO!

I WAS SO FUCKING MAD WHEN THEY PULLED YOU OUT OF MY GRASP. WE HAD YOU ON THE PLANE AND EVERYTHING. WE SHOWED YOU THE END OF THE WORLD.

BUT I HAD YOU PEGGED WRONG. I THOUGHT YOU WERE MORE OF A TRUE BELIEVER TYPE. YOU WANTED PROOF, SO I GAVE YOU PROOF.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU WERE CHASING AFTER ALL, WAS IT? IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HIM. AND FUCK, HE'S BEEN A USEFUL ASSET FOR THE TEAM. YOU'LL SEE WHEN YOU COME OVER TO OUR SIDE.

I'D NEVER...

YOOHUU'RE A MEAN LITTLE BOY.

ALWAYS BEEN SOOOO MEAN.

I'VE ALREADY KILLED TWO PEOPLE TONIGHT.

AND IT'S FUCKING KILLING YOU.

LOOK. I REALIZE I'M NOT GOING TO CONVINCE YOU RIGHT AWAY. YOU NEED TO GET THERE ON YOUR OWN. I RESPECT THAT.

BUT YOU'VE GOT A BIGGER ROLE TO PLAY THAN YOU REALIZE. **SHE'S** GOT HER EYES ON YOU. SHE'S BEEN WATCHING FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.

THE WOMAN IN RED...WHO IS SHE...**WHAT** IS SHE?

THAT'S THE MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION, ISN'T IT?

GET INTO THOSE ARCHIVES, COLE. THERE'S STILL SO MUCH YOU NEED TO LEARN ABOUT HOW THIS WORLD WORKS.

JUST REMEMBER. THEY PUT THIS DEMON IN YOUR HEAD TO TRY AND CONTROL YOU. I TOOK IT **OUT** OF YOUR HEAD TO FREE **EVERY-BODY.**

I'LL BE IN TOUCH, KIDDO.

SEEEE YOUUUU SOON.

WHERE IS HE?

HE...HE WENT IN THERE...

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OUT OF THE APARTMENT?

NO.

WELL. HE FOUND ONE.

RUBY...WHY DID YOU AND LEE PICK ME? WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL ME AT THE END OF THE WORLD?

I THOUGHT I KNEW.

BLACK HAT...THEY'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU YOUR ENTIRE LIFE. THEY ARRANGED FOR YOU TO BE AT THAT CONFERENCE. THEY WERE TRYING TO RECRUIT YOU.

I THINK LEE KNEW THAT. I THINK HE WANTED TO BEAT THEM TO IT.

BUT WHY?! WHY ME?!

I DON'T KNOW, COLE, I REALLY DON'T KNOW.

DEVIATION 1

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DALLAS, TX.
November 24th, 1963.
11:21 a.m.

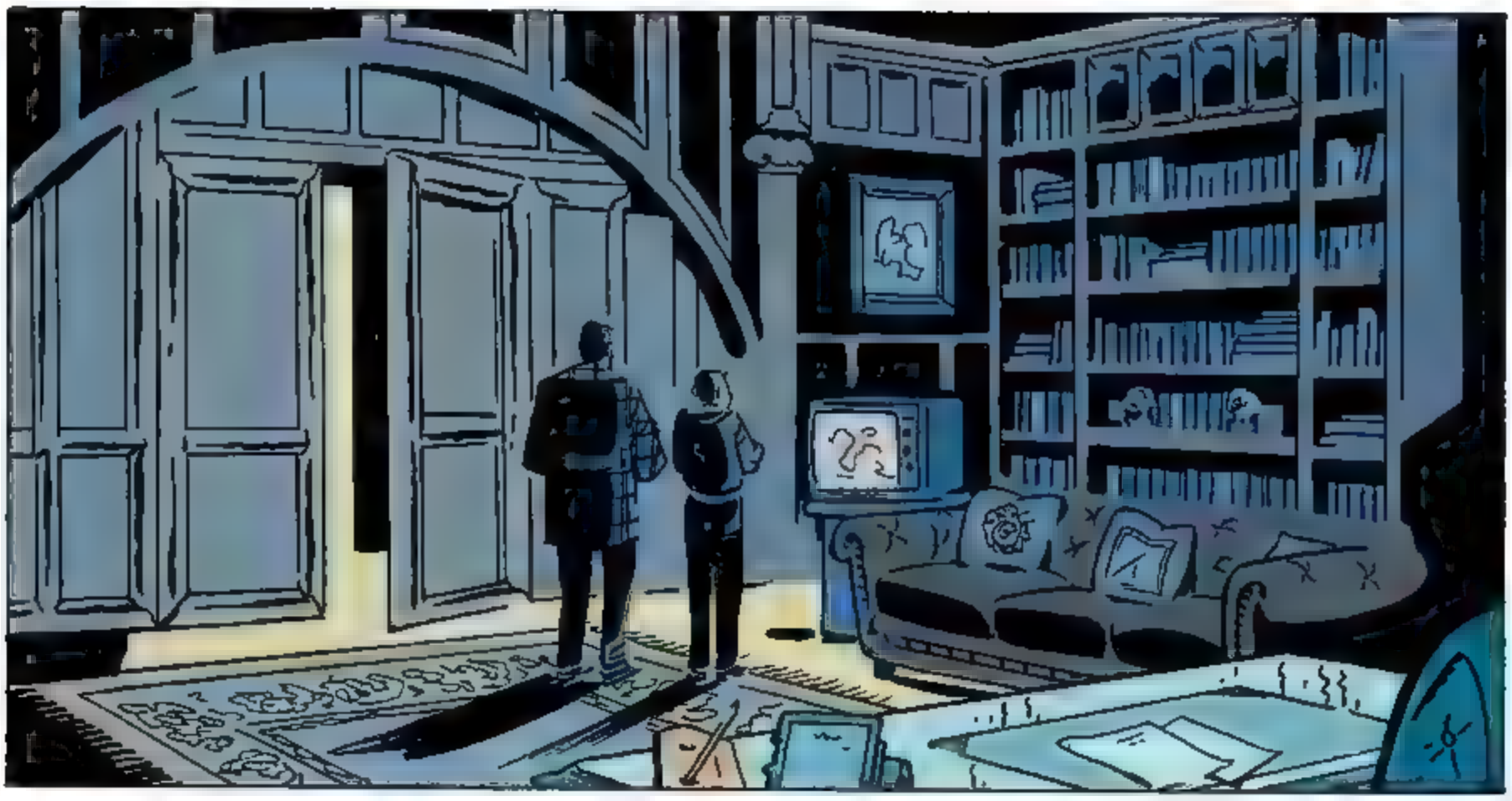
THERE'S LEE OSWALD.

POP!

HE'S BEEN SHOT! HE'S BEEN SHOT!
LEE OSWALD HAS BEEN SHOT.

THERE'S A MAN WITH A GUN...IT'S ABSOLUTE PANIC.
ABSOLUTE PANIC IN THE BASEMENT OF DALLAS POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS. DETECTIVES HAVE THEIR GUNS DRAWN.

OSWALD HAS BEEN SHOT. THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT.
OSWALD HAS BEEN SHOT.



OKAY, SO...WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
YOU'RE DEAD, LEE. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS YOU HAVE TO STAY DEAD.

YEAH. OKAY. BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

IT MEANS GET COMFORTABLE. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SEE THE SUN FOR A WHILE.

YOU WANT ME TO LIVE IN A BASEMENT?
YES.
I'M NOT LIVING IN A FUCKING BASEMENT.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU'RE DEAD. OVER THE COMING MONTHS, THEY'RE GOING TO LAY OUT THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO DIED ON EVERY NEWS PROGRAM.

IT WON'T BE A PRETTY PICTURE THEY PAINT, LEE. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A SAD LITTLE NOBODY, KICKED AROUND ALL YOUR LIFE, UNTIL YOU TRIED TO GRAB A BIT OF NOTORIETY FOR YOURSELF.

BUT IT'S CRUCIAL THAT THAT STORY END WITH A VERIFIABLE DEATH. THAT'S WHY IT HAD TO HAPPEN OUT IN THE OPEN, ON LIVE TELEVISION. IN FRONT OF MILLIONS.

YOU ARE, AT PRESENT, ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY. WE DO NOT WANT PEOPLE TO SEE YOU WALKING AROUND WASHINGTON DC.

THEN PUT ME IN A FUCKING CABIN IN THE WOODS, FAR AWAY FROM HERE.

THAT WOULDN'T SERVE MY PURPOSES.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO TO SCHOOL, LEE.

WHAT THE FUCK **IS** THIS PLACE, EVEN?

THESE ARE THE SECRET ARCHIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

I THOUGHT WE WERE IN THE BUSINESS OF **DESTROYING** RECORDS, NOT KEEPING THEM...

THAT'S A REDUCTIVE VIEW.

OUR PURPOSE ISN'T JUST TO REMOVE THE DARK THREADS THAT COULD UNRAVEL OUR GREAT NATION. WE ALSO MUST TELL THE STORY OF THE COUNTRY AS WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE TOLD.

RECOVERED FROM THE SOVIET MINISTRY OF LIES

AND WE MUST TELL IT BETTER THAN OUR ENEMIES.

SO, WHAT? THESE BOOKS TELL THE **REAL** HISTORY OF AMERICA OR SOMETHING?

A FEW OF THEM DO...BUT MOSTLY THESE ARE **OTHER** STORIES I'VE GATHERED FROM AROUND THE WORLD, FROM SOCIETIES LARGE AND POWERFUL ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE TRUTH.

AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

YOU NEED TO **READ** THEM, LEE.

I'M NOT MUCH OF A READER.

THEN YOU WON'T HAVE MUCH OF A **FUTURE** HERE WITH THE DEPARTMENT, AND I SHOULD HAVE LET THAT TWO-BIT GANGSTER SHOOT YOU.

YOU'LL START AT THE BEGINNING. THE OLDEST BOOK IN OUR POSSESSION. WE SWIPED IT FROM RIGHT UNDER THE SOVIETS' NOSES FROM ADOLPH HITLER'S BUNKER IN BERLIN AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

GERMAN OFFICERS ACQUIRED THE BOOK THROUGH THEIR ALLIES IN ROME.

BUT IT WAS WRITTEN AT THE END OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM.

THE HIDDEN INQUISITION.

COMMISSIONED BY POPE SYLVESTER II IN THE YEAR 1000 A.D.

IS THIS LATIN? I DON'T KNOW HOW TO READ LATIN.

YOU CAN BORROW THIS, TOO.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

THIS IS GOING TO TAKE ME AGES TO GET THROUGH.

GOOD. INFORMATION **SHOULDN'T** COME EASY. YOU'LL ARRIVE AT IT MORE HONESTLY LIKE THIS.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

BECAUSE I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT JUST HAPPENED IN DALLAS. I UNDERSTAND MORE THAN MAYBE ANYONE ELSE IN THIS COUNTRY, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.

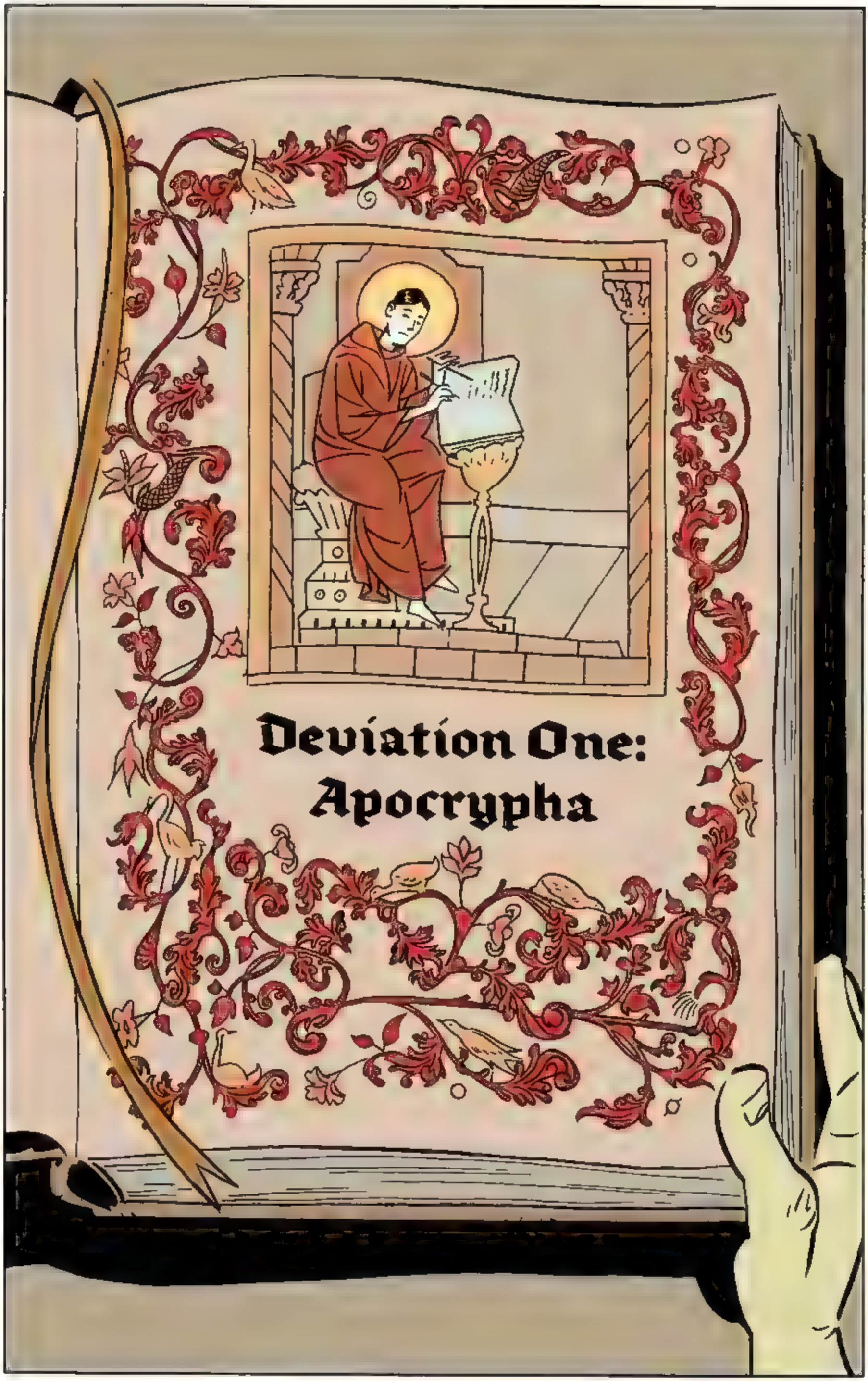
I NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO KNOW WHAT I KNOW.

WHY ME?

MAYBE I'LL TELL YOU WHEN YOU FINISH THAT BOOK.

GOOD LUCK.

FUCK.


Deviation One:
Apocrypha

THE BLACK FOREST

1000 AD

Oh, no...

There's no time for this.

Isn't there?

Ah, Pardon me.

I seem to be having a little trouble with my cart.

I see that.

I was told there was a cottage a little way into the woods.

The children in the village called it *The Witch's House*, and bade me not to go there.

But I'm naturally curious, and in need.

You're nearly there.

The mossy gate... ...just up ahead.

Th-thank you.

Of course.

God in heaven...

Are you lost?

My cart's wheel broke, a little way down the road.

Forgive me... I just didn't expect to see something so lush. The rest of the world hasn't caught up to spring yet.

Or perhaps I haven't caught up to the rest of the world.

I didn't see you there when I walked in.

That's the idea. I like my solitude.

I do, as well.

You know, I was told a witch lives in this house.

And the local Abbot couldn't have that, could he?

I meant no threat by it. Children's stories, I have no doubt.

No, it's their parents.

The children come here, I give them some honey and tell them about the little spirits that live in the forest that might carry them away if they stray too far from the path.

And if one of them is sick, I know some helpful herbs. Things my mother taught me. But to the children it's a kind of magic, I suppose.

The Abbot has warned their parents that I'm a pagan, and that I'll eat the children up if left on my own.

But warn a child not to do a thing, and they'll run right toward it.

But I'd be more likely to roast that cruel fat man than any of the young ones. For the nonsense he's filling their minds with.

So, you ARE pagan.

No. I just remember what your Church wants them to forget. Which I imagine is why you're here.

Perhaps I'm just a curious young monk from the next town over, and wanted to make my mind up for myself about the old witch in the woods.

You're amusing.

I don't mean to be.

Yes, you do. You're a political thing, you want me to like you. It makes your job easier.

You dress like one of the Benedictine Monks, but your robe is made from a strange wool. Softer than I've seen.

It would have cost you a great deal, even if a merchant found his way up into the depths of the Black Forest.

I believe the Benedictine order requires a vow of poverty.

You have a keen eye.

And a keener mind.

I have a hand wagon that I doubt I've used since you were born. You are welcome to it, if that is truly the nature of your visit.

But I know it isn't.

Oh?

Don't play coy with me. I'm old and I don't have the patience for it.

Come have a cup of wine with me.

What do they call you?

Brother Thomas.

A doubter, then. GOOD. We should all doubt a little more, I think.

You live here alone.

Yes. For many years now.

Do you have any living relatives?

Now, THAT I'll keep to myself. I made the choice to tell my stories, knowing the consequences. Take that for what it is.

Fair enough.

I'm curious what they told you. Do you know who I am?

I...know who you SAY you are.

And? Tell me. Who am I?

You call yourself Julia Augusta.

You tell the children that you are the progeny of the last Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus.

Deposed by Odoacer in the Year of our Lord, 476.

So you say.

As personally as anyone.

I hear your Holy Roman Emperor plans to exhume Charlemagne's grave in Aachen this year. A celebration of one thousand years since the birth of Christ.

Such a clever move. It's all so CLEVER.

The children go around telling each other that you claim to be his daughter, and this is your five-hundredth birthday.

You're looking very well for five hundred, I have to say.

And I suppose you knew Charlemagne personally, in your five hundred years.

Children simplify the stories they hear to make them easier to understand. Your Church understands this.

I've seen them play games of knights and kings. Each of them wanting to be Charlemagne.

You've lost me.

What do you know, young priest? Are you just a knife in a sheath? Or is there a brain in there?

I'd like to think I have a brain.

I think that's why I was asked by the Holy See to travel East, past Byzantium.

To the Mohammedan city of Baghdad, and its House of Wisdom.

To see its wonders with my own eyes. And to learn.

And what did your pope want you to learn?

The power of numbers.

You DO know.

What do you say I know?

That the ground is not solid beneath our feet. That the belief of the people in great numbers shapes the truth of the world.

This is what you tell the children?

No. This is what I am telling YOU. Listen, boy.

I see in your eyes that you do know it, and more than that, I see that your true mission here was to see whether or not I did.

The Church wouldn't want anyone contradicting its little *children's story.*

For Centuries, Rome's power stretched across the known world, and echoed to lands far beyond it. But in time, all things decay and begin to show their weaknesses.

*The barbarians of the north grew stronger, and the Roman Legion grew weaker. The Emperor Constantine retreated to a new city in the east.

*And just as Christianity was declared the religion of the empire, that empire was split in two. Within two centuries, the last Western Roman Emperor would fall.

Europe shattered into a hundred little kingdoms, fighting each other for land and glory...

*Your Pope was left in Rome, struggling to maintain influence in a fast-changing world.

*His subjects were no longer Roman. They were the descendants of the same barbarian Tribes that had destroyed the Empire. There was no central power.

*A new power rose in the Holy Land, followers of the prophet Muhammad, converting the local Christians to their new religion and empire."

*In principle, your pope ruled an Eastern Church but he held no power over it.

*The only tools at hand were a new order of monks building monasteries all throughout the little kingdoms of the north."

And a profoundly dangerous weapon...

Anno Domini

*...a calendar."

You think our calendar is DANGEROUS?

Not inherently. I would not be surprised to learn that it was crafted with mundane intentions.

But it was not USED in that way. You damn well know this.

Stop speaking in riddles!

The Church needed a central pillar of authority.

And so, it created a little children's story that it could spread through its monasteries.

Of a great King who united all of Europe, crowned by the Pope himself as the new Holy Roman Emperor.

Charlemagne.

A classical hero in the mold of the mythic Greeks, but far more modern.

A legendary Emperor who would appeal to the descendants of the Romans and the Barbarians alike, and build a new European society centered around the Church.

An emperor crowned the inheritor of Rome by the Pope himself.

Creating the precedent by which the current Emperor, Otto, now sits on the throne.

State your accusation plainly.

There IS no Charlemagne. There never was.

Admit it.

The Church is strong, but it can't just create an Emperor and his history. That's absurd.

You MUST understand that's absurd.

It could if it used those same monasteries to move the Church's new calendar forward by some three hundred years.

To the first millennium, with all the pomp and circumstance that it would grant.

To give a great mythic history to your Holy Roman Empire, that you do not present as myth, but as fact.

And in the minds of the people, you grant them all a false reprieve. Rather than let them cope with a changing world, you have given them a colorful fiction.

A fiction that puts the loss of western dominance deep in the past, so that the people are ready for their powerful resurgence on the world stage, without humility.

Rome fell, and it deserved to fall. All things fall in time, or the Pharaohs would still rule us all.

You have rejected that inherent truth for the fantasy the people would LIKE to hear, and that will change the world in dangerous, dangerous ways.

What will a resurgent church do to hold this power? Split from the Eastern Church? Attack the Holy Land to undermine the Mohammedan threat to Roman supremacy? Drive the Moors out of Iberia?

I suppose Otto going to the tomb of Charlemagne is the final test... To SEE if you've gotten enough people to believe...

I wonder what your Holy Roman Emperor will find. An empty coffin, or the bones of a fictional man.

"In the days of Rome, this power was wielded CAREFULLY.

"A widespread belief in a powerful Roman Empire kept us strong for centuries. We made ourselves seem inevitable in our history."

A city founded by brothers raised by wolves. A founding myth to give us weight in our own eyes and the world's.

But even the cruelest emperors never claimed to rewrite all of TIME in our benefit.

This is MADNESS! You are MAD!

You have created unsteady ground on which to build your dangerous new Western Civilization. You have taken control of the written word, and time.

And now you will build a whole great history on a bed of lies, and you will have to maintain your power or it will all come toppling down on your heads.

You will go to Aachen, and you will see the bones of a man who DID NOT EXIST, and you will comfort yourself knowing that I am just an old mad woman, who believed she was descended from emperors!

But the truth will linger in you. Why did your masters in Rome dispatch you to this deep dark forest to silence an old woman?

Why do they fear the truth I wield?

You tell a terrific story. I'm glad to have heard it, but it cannot be true.

I've read the histories of the last five hundred years. I know each Pope, every king of Italy...

Did you know that the Roman Empire did not use a numbered dating system in any formal matters?

It wasn't necessary to count back to the Empire's beginning or anything like that.

There were always two Consuls of Rome elected at the start of each year, from the beginning of the Republic to the fall of the empire.

They would just say it was the year of the two consuls.

Our family adopted our own system on the same principle, keeping a record of each year. Which I have kept safe, here.

Which is why I can tell you with some assurance that I am ninety-nine years old.

The fall of Rome, by my family's calendar, was just shy of two hundred and thirty years ago. Not five hundred and thirty.

The millennium is still three hundred years away, young man.

Forgive me... but none of this is true. None of this CAN be true. These are lies being planted in your mind by the devil itself...

I saw it walking from your very garden.

A long life has done plenty of twisting without any devil. And you will never understand what that woman is or why she walks this world.

But it does not matter if you believe. You're just a knife after all, but I hope you'll carry my words to the men who set you on your butchering road.

I will die soon. I have no children, though I tried in my younger years. But I am NOT alone.

The bloodline of the empire lives on in Europe and we are watching the Church from every shadow of this continent, hiding among the nobility.

Keeping ourselves secret and strong.

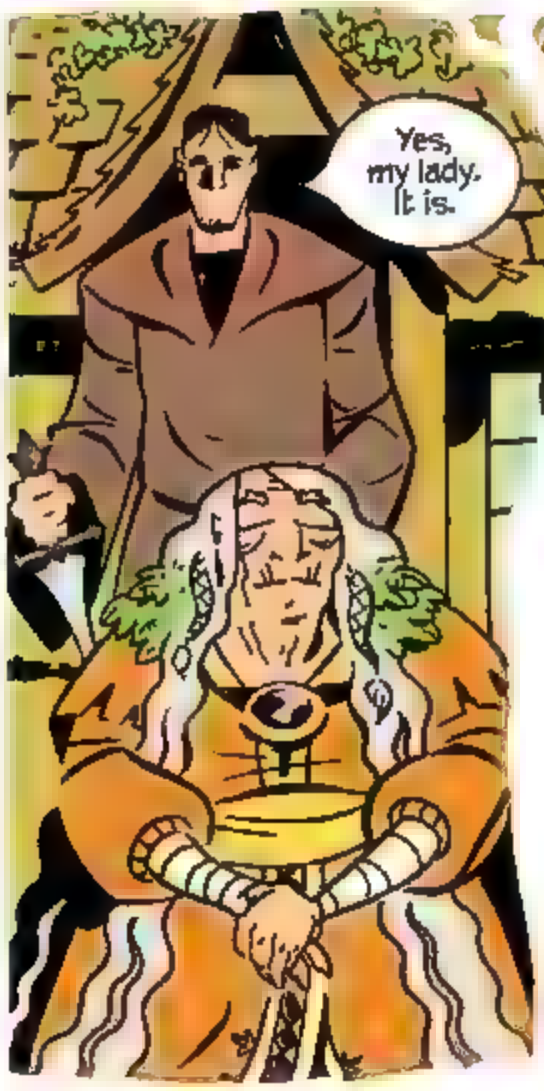
We are THE ENLIGHTENED. We know how the world works, and we will do what is in our power to stop you from your horrendous overreach.

Will you do that for me, Thomas? Will you tell them we are watching?

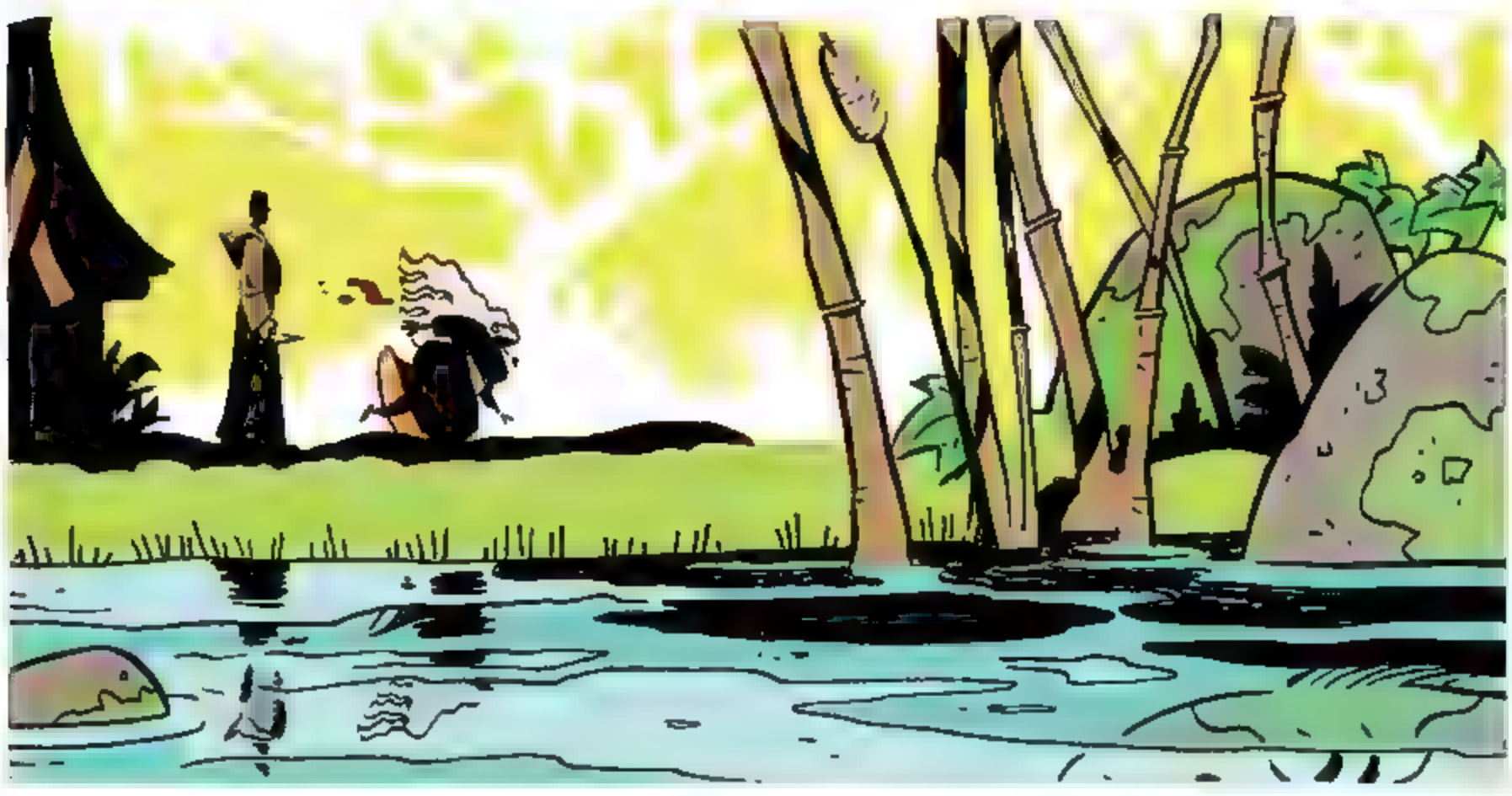
Yes. I'll tell them.

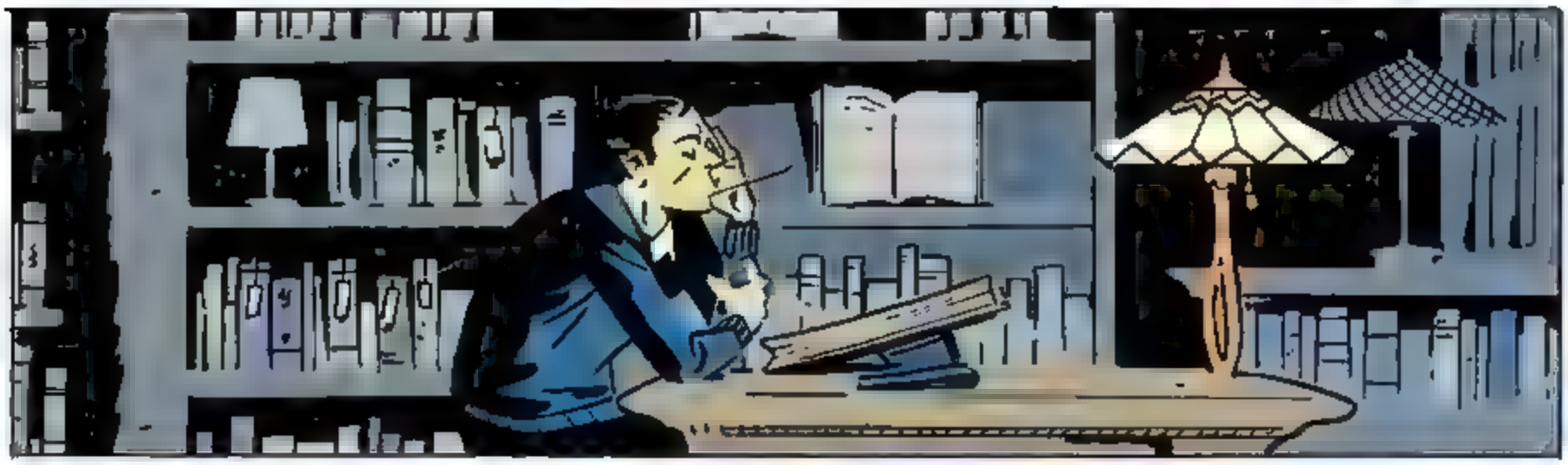
Good... Good...

It is a beautiful garden, isn't it?


Yes, my lady. It is.

Hail Caesar.

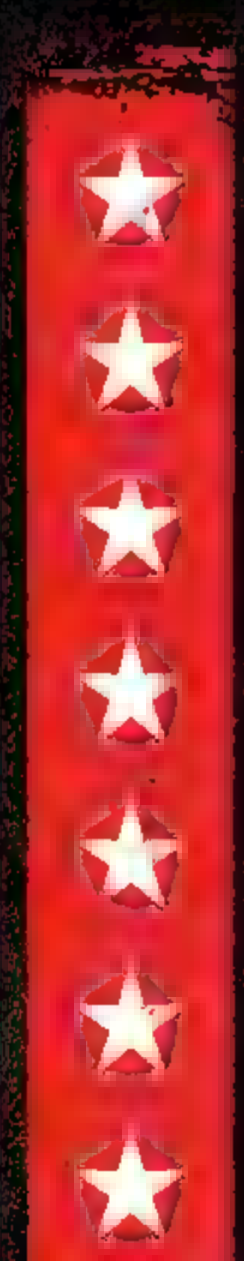




THE ENLIGHTENED...
FUCK ME...

illa populus
secretum
Illuminati.
THE ENLIGHTENED
=
ILLUMINATI

T OF TRUTH
S OF AMERICA
DEVIATION 2



WHAT THE HELL...
I HAD ALL THIS SHIT ORGANIZED! WHO MOVED MY THINGS?!
RESIST THE MEN IN BLACK!
DOC HYNES

I'M THE ONLY FUCKING PERSON WHO'S BEEN IN THIS ROOM FOR SIX FUCKING MONTHS...

THE FUCK IS THIS?!

NO, PLEASE!

IS THIS A SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE...?

NOT...NOT EXACTLY.

PLEASE. I HAVE THEM ORGANIZED. THE DIRECTOR TOLD ME I SHOULD PUT THEM IN THE ARCHIVES. I WAS GOING TO PUT EVERYTHING BACK WHERE I FOUND IT.

IS THAT YOUR DAD'S SUIT COAT?

MY STEPDAD'S.

RIGHT.

HE SAID I NEEDED TO DRESS PROPERLY NOW THAT I HAD A REAL JOB.

WELL, YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB THERE. WHAT'S UP WITH THE FOIL?

IT KEEPS THE MAGAZINES SAFE. I WRAP THEM IN PAPER, AND THEN IN FOIL SO THEY KEEP THEIR SHAPE.

THAT'S INVENTIVE. AND DEFINITELY WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

DON'T!

PLEASE. GIVE IT BACK!

YOU'RE A LITTLE GOOFY, AREN'T YOU, KID?

PLEASE, MR. OSWALD. GIVE IT BACK.

YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

I THINK EVERYONE IN THE WORLD KNOWS WHO LEE HARVEY OSWALD IS.

BUT YEAH. THE DIRECTOR TOLD ME I MIGHT RUN INTO YOU DOWN HERE.

YEAH. OKAY, FAIR.

TELL ME. WHY THE KINKY HEAD-GEAR?

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME.

KID...

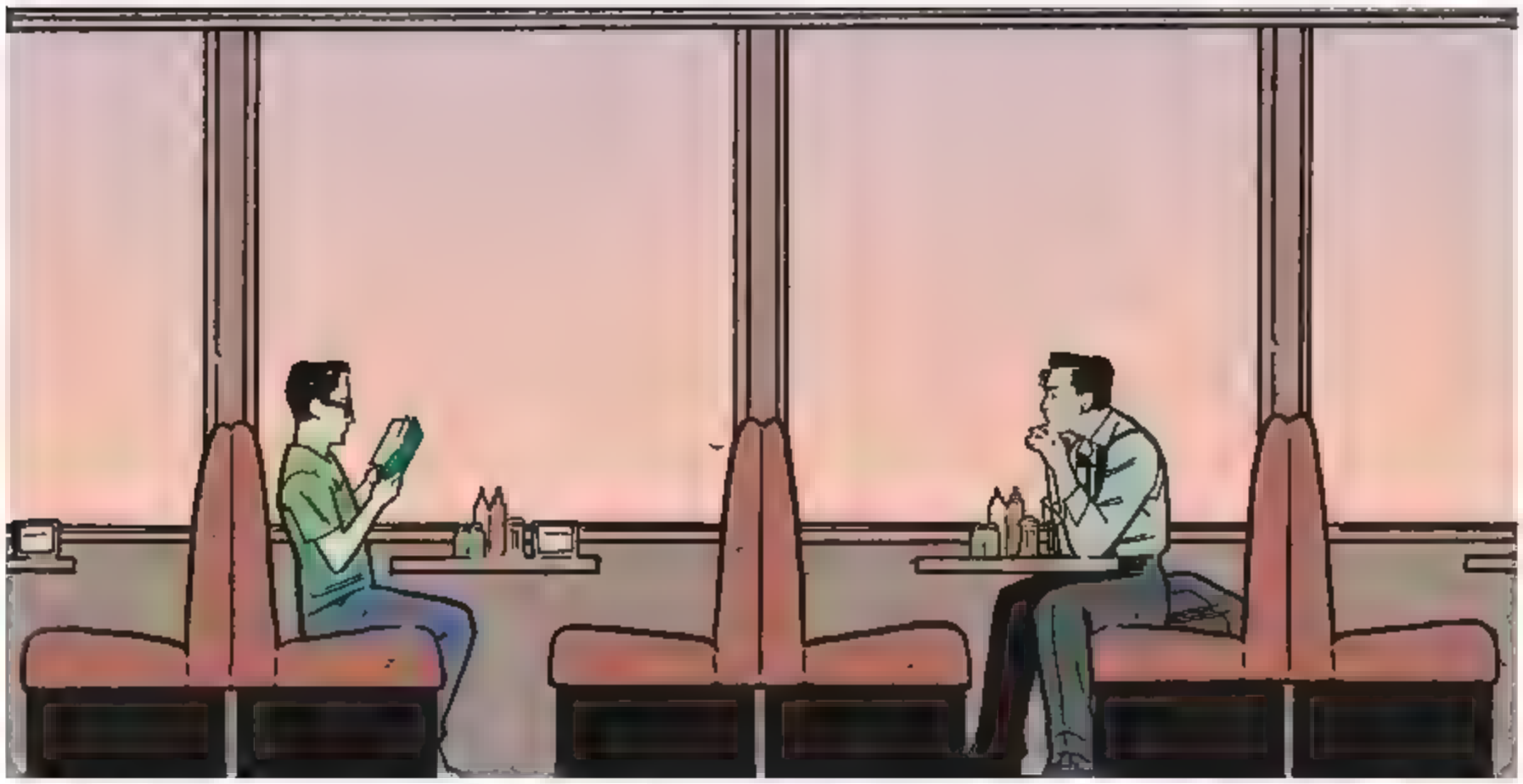
IT'S DOC. DOC HYNES.

I'VE BEEN IN THIS ROOM, READING THINGS I NEVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED, FOR SIX MONTHS.

I'M BECOMING A REAL OPEN-MINDED TYPE OF GUY.

HOW'D YOU END UP HERE?

DEVIATION TWO:



YOU WAITING ON SOMEONE?

YEAH. I HAVE A MEETING.
YOU'RE MEETING WITH DOCTOR HYNES.

DOC. IT'S DOC HYNES.
YOU'RE WAITING FOR HIM, TOO?
NO, UH... I AM HIM.

CHRIST.

YOU'RE A DOCTOR?
NOT IN, UH... THE WAY YOU MEAN. DOC'S A NICKNAME.
DOES ANYBODY ELSE CALL YOU BY THIS NICKNAME?

NOT YET. IT'S KIND OF AN ASPIRATIONAL NICKNAME.

THIS WAS A BAD IDEA. I DROVE SIX HOURS FOR THIS BAD IDEA.

YOU'RE FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

YEAH, KID. I'M FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

YOU SHOULD GET SOME PIE. THEY DO GOOD PIE HERE.

I DON'T WANT ANY--

YOU WANT ANYTHING?

JUST A COFFEE.

AND A SLICE OF PEACH PIE.

NO. JUST THE COFFEE.

I MEANT FOR ME.

FINE.

TELL YOUR SON HE CAN'T DRAW GOBLINS ON THE TABLE. I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE LATE CLEANING UP GOBLIN PICTURES AGAIN.

YES, MA'AM.

NO MORE GOBLINS.

THEY'RE NOT GOBLINS.

I DON'T CARE. NO DRAWING ON THE TABLE.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

SEVENTEEN.

HOW OLD ARE YOU, REALLY?

FIFTEEN.

OKAY. I AM GOING TO DRINK MY COFFEE AND THEN I AM GOING TO LEAVE. THAT'S HOW LONG YOU GET MY ATTENTION.

YOU READ MY PAPERS.

FROM YOUR LITTLE MAGAZINE? YES, I DID. IT'S FLASHIER THAN THE OTHER FLYING SAUCER RAGS I'VE SEEN.

NOT USUALLY *THAT* FLASHY, THOUGH.

I DO THIS TO KEEP THE ONES I'M CARRYING WITH ME SAFE. I LIKE HOW THE FOIL HOLDS THE SHAPE. IT KEEPS THE ISSUES CRISP.

AND THERE WAS A STORY I READ BY JULIAN HUXLEY IN AN ISSUE OF *AMAZING STORIES* THAT SAID THEY COULD KEEP OUT TELEPATHIC BRAIN WAVES.

I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULD KEEP THE FLIPPING BAD GUYS FROM FINDING OUT WHAT I'M WRITING.

WHY?

BECAUSE I WANT TO BE A PART OF THIS MOMENT.

THIS MOMENT.

IT'S EXCITING, DON'T YOU THINK? IT'S LIKE THE UNIVERSE IS OPENING UP, TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING, IF WE'RE SMART ENOUGH TO LISTEN.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE UNIVERSE IS TRYING TO TELL US?

THAT THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO IT THAN WE KNOW! THAT WE'RE JUST SOME SMALL PIECE OF SOMETHING. YOU CAN'T TELL ME IT'S A COINCIDENCE!

WE UNLOCK THE SECRET OF THE ATOM, AND LESS THAN TWO YEARS LATER PEOPLE START SEEING STRANGE LIGHTS IN THE SKY, MOVING FASTER THAN ANY AIRCRAFT KNOWN TO MAN.

IT'S LIKE SOME HIGHER INTELLIGENCE IS COMING TO CHECK ON US, TO SEE IF WE'RE READY FOR THE NEXT STEP IN HUMAN ENLIGHTENMENT. IN... IN OUR FLIPPING *EVOLUTION.*

HOW DO YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO FARE? ARE WE GOING TO PASS THE TEST?

I DON'T KNOW.

BUT MAYBE... KNOWING THE TEST IS THERE IS ENOUGH? MAYBE THESE LIGHTS WILL MAKE EVERYONE SEE HOW SMALL WE ARE.

MAYBE WE CAN END ALL WAR AND JOIN THEM UP THERE.

IT SOUNDS NICE.

BUT YOU'RE NOT WRITING ABOUT THEM, ARE YOU? ABOUT ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY.

NOT DIRECTLY, NO... I FIGURED THAT THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS HAD THAT COVERED. I WANTED MY OWN ANGLE.

SO, YOU DECIDED TO PICK ON THE G-MEN.

YOU DID READ THEM, *HUH?*

RESIST THE MEN IN BLACK!

DOC HYNES

RESIST THE MEN IN BLACK!

AND THEN YOU SENT COPIES TO THE PRESS OFFICE OF THE AIR FORCE. AND TO THE FBI. AND TO WHO KNOWS HOW MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

EXPLAIN THAT.

OH, THAT'S EASY.

I DON'T THINK THE MEN IN BLACK *ARE* G-MEN. I DON'T THINK YOU'D BE HERE IF THEY WERE.

THEY'RE SOMETHING... STRANGER THAN THAT.

STRANGER HOW?

The first known encounter with the Men in Black came in 1947, three days before the Kenneth Arnold sightings that would introduce the term "Flying Saucers" to the world. A man named Harold Dahl was on a boat travelling between Tacoma and Maury Island in Washington when he saw six donut-shaped aircraft shining brilliantly in the night sky...

One of the aircraft struggled among the pack. There was an explosion and metal rained down upon Dahl's ship, burning the arm of his teenage son and killing their pet dog. Dahl gathered samples of the metal for evidence and reported the mysterious sighting to authorities in Tacoma.

The following morning, a man in a black suit contacted Dahl, and they met in a local diner. The man in black already knew the story of what had happened to Dahl, including details Dahl hadn't revealed to the authorities the night before. The stranger threatened Dahl and his family not to spread the story...

Later, Dahl would find the photos he took of the lights over Maury Island had been "misplaced", leaving no record of the encounter.

This was the beginning, and it would only grow stranger from there.

1953. Albert K. Bender, the founder of one of the first widespread UFO organizations, the International Flying Saucer Bureau, and a magazine called Saucer Review, began to receive strange calls at his home in Bridgeport, CT. The calls gave Bender throbbing headaches, the room suddenly seeming to spin around him when he answered them. This left him with a sense of dread that would soon grow far, far worse.

One evening, Bender returned home to find a white glowing orb floating in the middle of his highly organized bedroom...The orb gave him a new wave of throbbing headaches before it vanished, and he found that his IFSB files were now in a state of disarray.

Soon after, he spent a night out at the movies, when the throbbing headache returned, along with a powerful sense of being watched. Out of the corner of his eye, Bender saw a man in a dark suit manifest in a seat nearby. He closed his eyes, and the man vanished...only for the sensation to return moments later, when he saw the man had manifested behind him, this time with glowing eyes.

The Men in Black suits kept manifesting around Bridgeport, CT, for months, each time coming with powerful headaches. But the worst encounter would come later in 1953...when three of the Men came to him. Bender claimed they revealed to him the true secret of the flying saucers, and then threatened that if he kept reporting on them, or revealed any of their secrets, they would return with deadly intent.

Bender, terrified out of his mind, immediately shut down the IFSB and Saucer Review to the shock and disappointment of its many members. In its final issue, he advised his former followers to be very careful reporting on the secrets of the UFOs.

Same year...Details of a strange encounter in Los Angeles are passed to Ufologist Harold T. Wilkins. Two towering men dressed in the familiar black arrived at an attorney's office out of the blue one day and were given senior positions at the firm.

No one, not even the director who hired them, could explain what they were there to do, and they moved strangely through the office, unnerving the other employees. The source reported that these men, each nearly seven feet tall, seemed not to have joints in their hands or wrists. Their skeletal structure seemed strangely inhuman.

At one point, one of these men leaned against an industrial metal bookcase and left a half-inch indentation in the shape of their strange, inhuman hand. This was the breaking point for Wilkins's source, who reported these mystery men to the FBI.

The bureau dispatched agents to the scene, but the Men in Black vanished as quickly as they had appeared. The FBI took the metal bookcase, and the source was informed later that it would have taken 2000 pounds of force to indent the bookcase like that.

The FBI would later deny any involvement, and all records of the case seem to have since been destroyed.

In 1961, just a few short years ago, outside of Seattle, WA, a UFO writer named W.D. Clendenon was corresponding with George Adamski about his UFO encounter, when he heard the doorbell ring.
A man dressed in black, with dark skin, was at the door. Clendenon noted the man's skin was impossibly smooth, his teeth perfectly white, and his glasses seemed to be more of a prop than anything. The man asked if he was a registered Republican, to which Clendenon responded that he was an independent and closed the door...but almost immediately reopened it.
Clendenon found himself compelled to speak about an aircraft he had been designing in his spare time, but the man seemed to know more about his blueprints than even he did.
When the man left, Clendenon felt compelled to go out into the backyard. It was early evening, and he saw a white ball of light in the sky approaching him...which quickly took the shape of the same UFO that he had been communicating with Adamski about...
And then the light shot off to the east. Many UFOs were spotted in the area that night.

I FIGURED...EVERYONE IS LOOKING FOR PROOF OF THE SAUCERS. THE UFOS...BUT I WANTED TO TRY AND HUNT THE PEOPLE TRYING TO GET EVERYONE TO SHUT UP.

I'VE BEEN DIGGING UP WHERE PEOPLE LIVE ONCE THEY REPORT A SIGHTING TO ONE OF THE OTHER UFO MAGS, AND THEN I CAMP OUT BY THEIR HOUSE AND WAIT.

AND YOU'VE SEEN THEM, THESE MEN IN BLACK SUITS?

WELL, NO. JUST SOME COPS WHO TOLD ME TO BUZZ OFF.

BUT I TALKED TO SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO HAVE. OR THE FOLKS WHO TALKED TO THE FOLKS.

AND YOU THINK THESE ENCOUNTERS ARE REAL.

I THINK...THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE TELLING THE TRUTH. REALITY IS KIND OF A WHOLE OTHER THING FROM THE TRUTH, ISN'T IT?

THEY'RE EXPLAINING WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, AS THEY BELIEVE IT TO HAVE HAPPENED. MIGHT THERE BE MORE LOGICAL EXPLANATIONS? SURE.

BUT THAT'S INTERPRETATION. THAT'S SUBJECTIVE.

THE DEEPER TRUTH IS IN THE ACTUAL MOMENT THEY SAW SOMETHING THAT SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE. AND THAT EXPERIENCE ***CHANGED*** THEM.

I'M SURE NOW THE UFOS HAVE GOTTEN POPULAR ENOUGH THAT THERE ARE FAKERS WHO DO IT FOR THE PUBLICITY.

BUT EVEN IN THE BIG PUBLICITY CASES, LIKE BETTY AND BARNEY HILL...

WHY WOULD AN INTERRACIAL COUPLE WITH AN ORDINARY, STABLE LIFE THAT THEY MANAGED TO CARVE OUT IN THIS HATEFUL COUNTRY DRAW ALL OF THAT ATTENTION TO THEMSELVES?

I DON'T KNOW.

THE PEOPLE ON YOUR END... THEY HAVE TO BE KIND OF FREAKED, RIGHT?

THE SMALL-MINDED ONES PROBABLY THINK THE COMMIES MIGHT HAVE SOME KIND OF SECRET AIRSHIPS...

AND THEN YOU GET REPORTS OF THESE AGENTS SHOWING UP, AND THEY ALL SEEM *OFF*. SOME FOLKS SAYING THEY LOOK ASIAN.

SO SUDDENLY YOU HAVE FBI AGENTS LIKE YOU KNOCKING ON THE DOORS OF ENTHUSIASTS OF THE STRANGE AND PARANORMAL, BECAUSE WE KNOW MORE THAN YOU DO.

AND MAYBE YOUR LOT PUTS THE FEAR OF GOD IN THEM, BECAUSE IN CASE THERE *ARE* RUSSIAN FLYING SAUCERS, YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE THINKING THEY'VE SPOTTED A MARTIAN WHEN IT COULD BE A NUKE.

BUT YOU DON'T THINK THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE AFRAID.

NOT OF THE SAUCERS. I THINK... THE SAUCERS ARE GOOD... THE SAUCERS ARE US DREAMING OF A BETTER FUTURE, ACROSS THE STARS. I'M NOT AFRAID OF THEM.

I GET AFRAID OF THE MEN IN BLACK SUITS WHO DON'T WANT HUMANITY TO BELIEVE THAT MORE IS POSSIBLE. WHO DON'T WANT US TO DREAM.

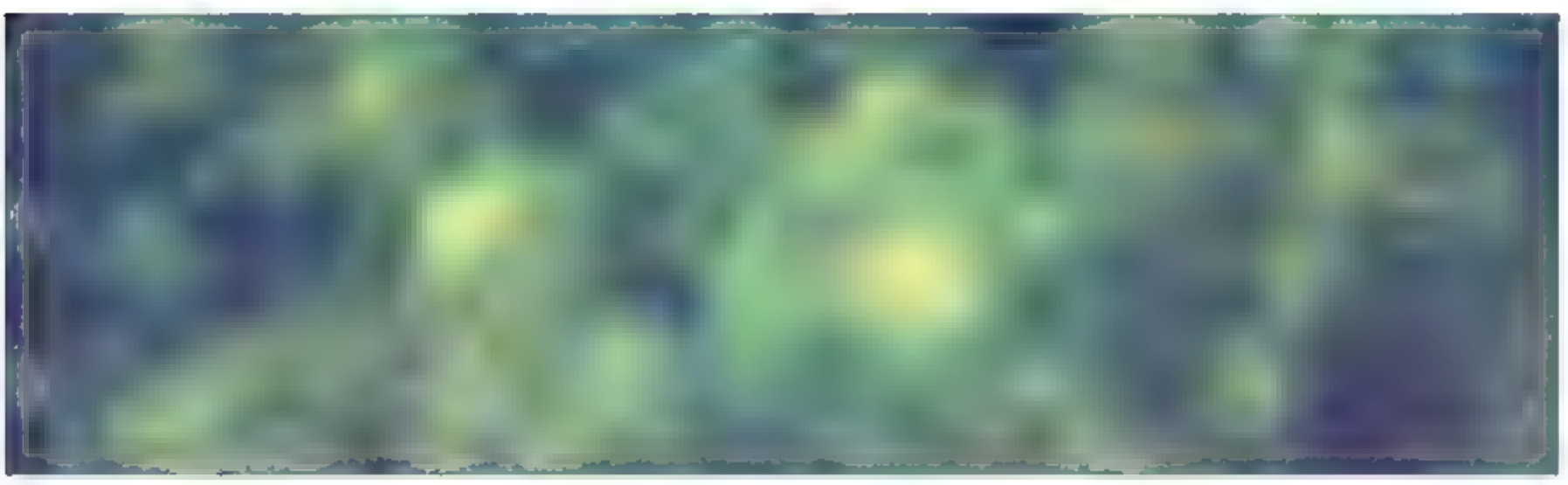
YOU'RE A SMART KID. I WAS EXPECTING SOME TWITCHY SCIENTIST WITH BIG GLASSES AND A POCKET PROTECTOR IN HIS POCKET PROTECTOR.

GIVE ME A FEW YEARS.

I WANT YOU TO TAKE MY CARD. IT DOESN'T HAVE MY NAME ON IT. IT DOESN'T HAVE MY AGENCY ON IT. BUT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR ME AT THAT NUMBER.

A MESSAGE.

LET ME KNOW IF YOU SEE ONE OF THESE MEN IN BLACK IN THE FLESH. AND THEN WE CAN HAVE A MUCH LONGER CONVERSATION.



RINGING

OH, CRUD.

HELLO, THIS IS THE HYNES RESIDENCE. DALTON SPEAKING.

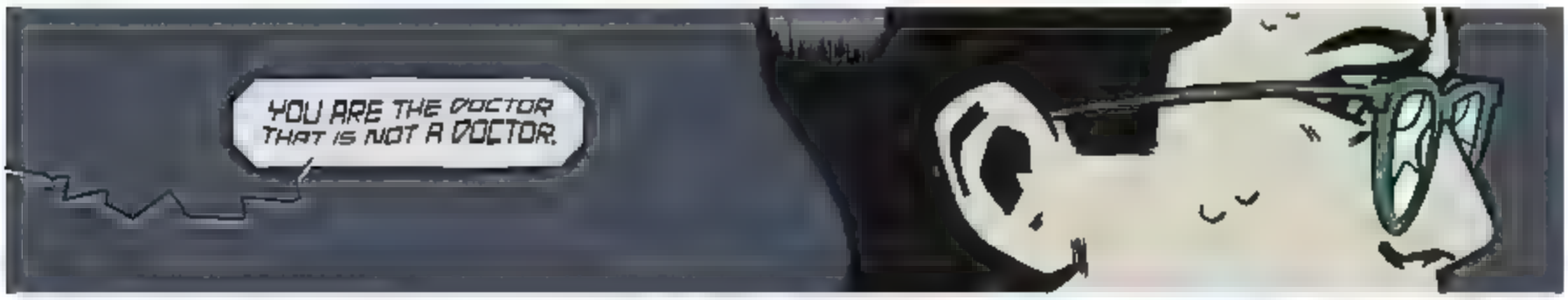
YOU ARE THE DOCTOR THAT IS NOT A DOCTOR.

HELLO?

YOU ARE PRESENT.

I AM IN YOUR HOUSE. I AM PRESENT.

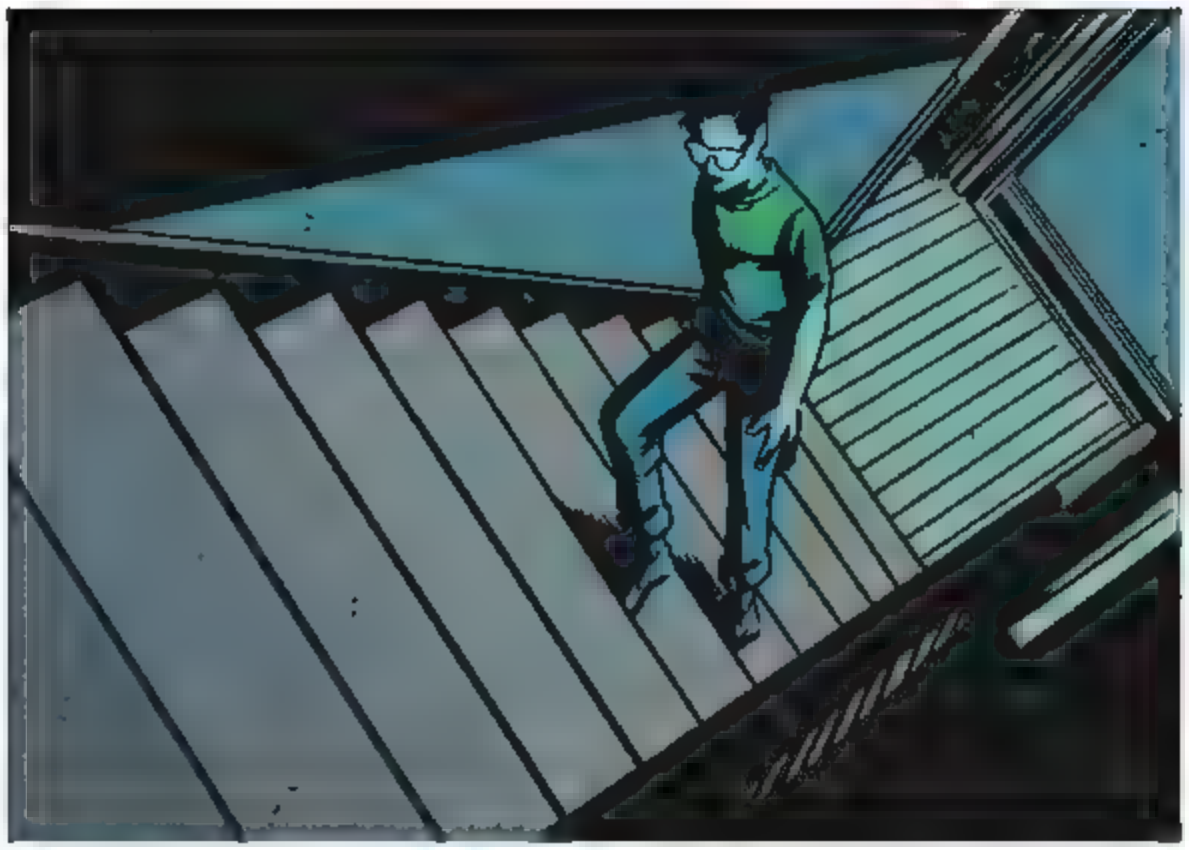
KNOCK KNOCK


YOU ARE THE DOCTOR THAT IS NOT A DOCTOR.

YOU ARE PRESENT.

I AM IN YOUR HOUSE. I AM PRESENT.

I...I DON'T...



MOM... DAN... THERE'S... SOMETHING IN THE HOUSE...

HAVE YOU BEEN HERE? SHE WAS HERE TOMORROW. SHE IS HERE NOW.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

STOP UNDER-STANDING.
YOU WON'T WRITE ABOUT THESE MEN ANYMORE. YOU WON'T EXIST ANYMORE.

I WON'T... EXIST?

LISTEN.

WHAT IS THIS?

IT'S... A LAMP.

A LAMB.

OH. A LAMP.

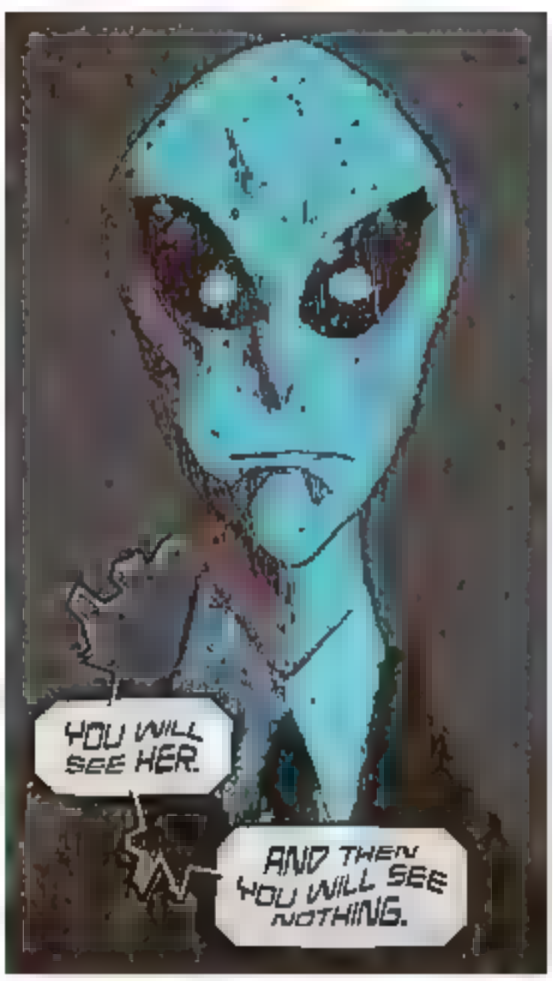
IT IS A LAMP.

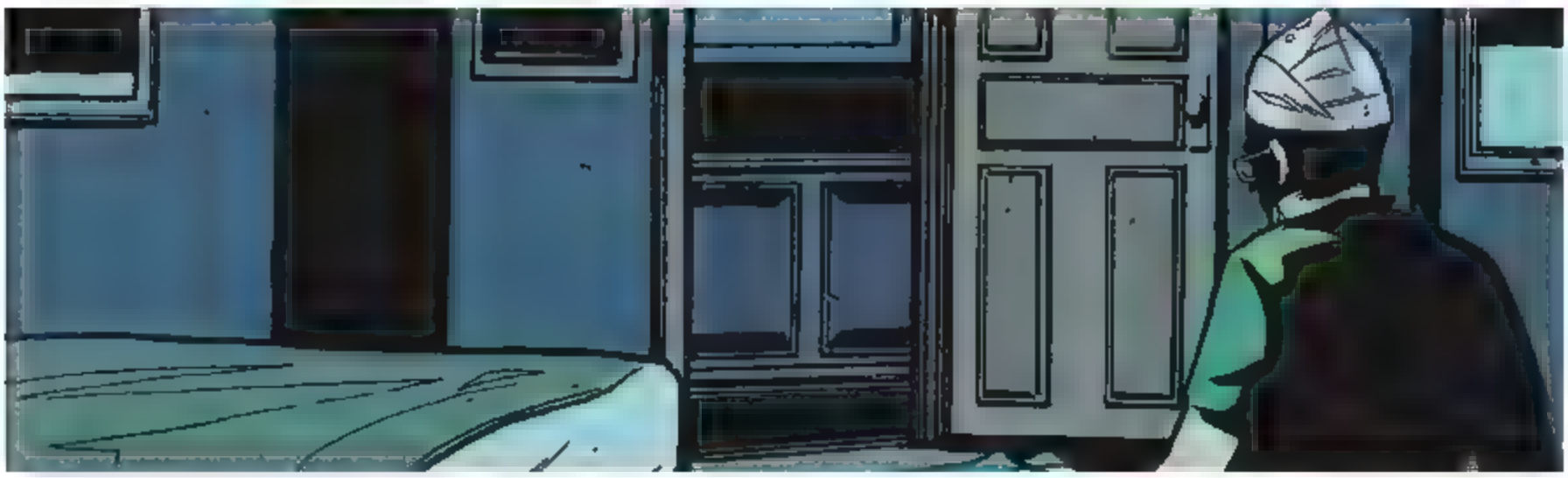
AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH!!

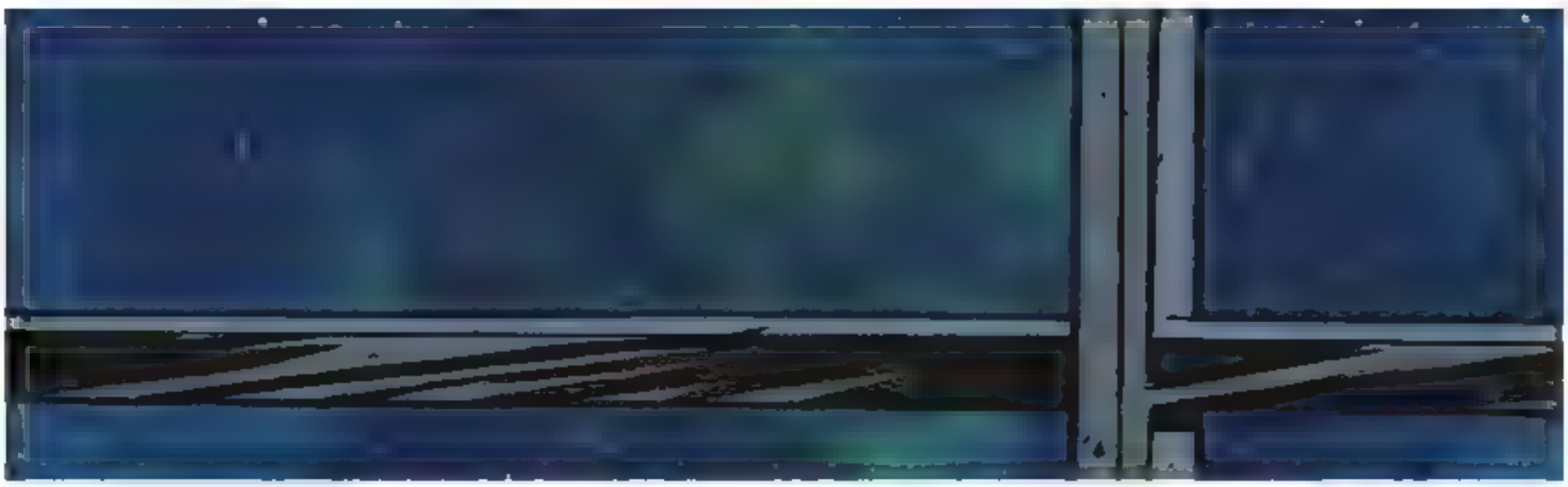
I DON'T...
I DON'T...

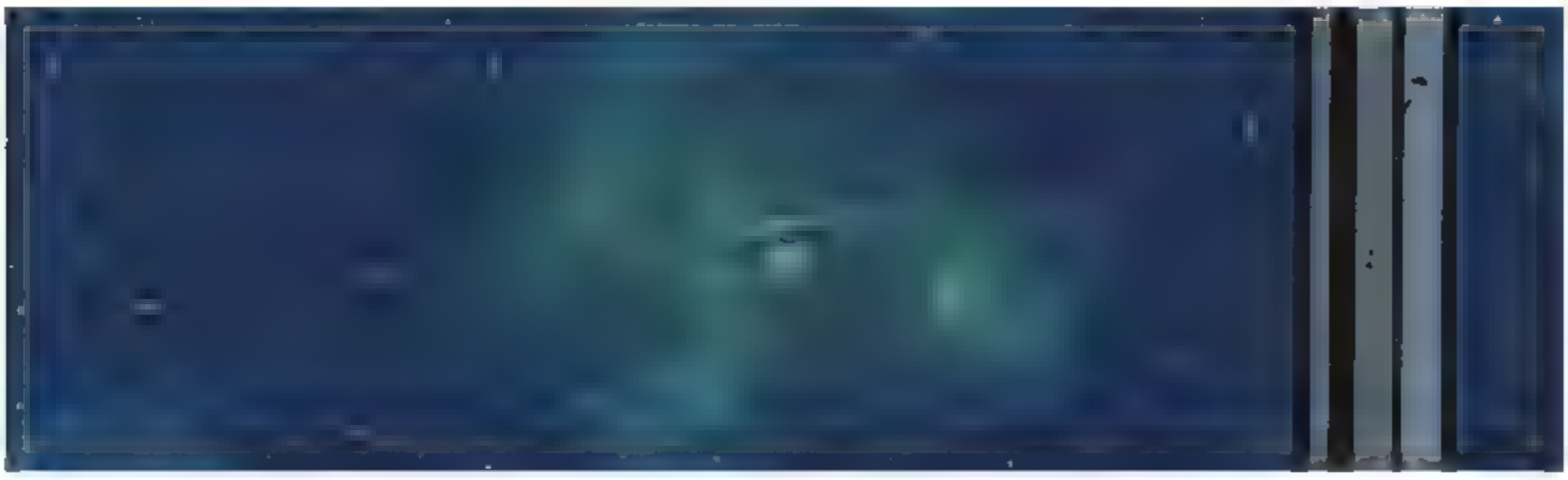
THE WORMING HAS BEGUN AGAIN. DOORS ARE OPEN.

TELL THE MAN THAT SHE IS ANGRY.


YOU WILL SEE HER.
AND THEN YOU WILL SEE NOTHING.







YOU SAW ALL THAT WITH YOUR OWN EYES...

I...I DON'T THINK I DID SEE IT WITH MY EYES. I THINK I SAW IT WITH MY MIND. I THINK THAT'S WHY THE FOIL HELPED.

THE DIRECTOR TOLD ME HIS THEORY ABOUT THE WORLD. ABOUT SUBJECTIVE REALITY... AND FOR SOME REASON...I THINK REALITY IS MORE MALLEABLE RIGHT NOW.

WORLD WAR II CHANGED WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT WAS POSSIBLE, AND ALL OF THOSE POSSIBILITIES ARE STARTING TO MANIFEST OUT THERE.

AND SOME OF THOSE POSSIBILITIES... THEY DON'T MEAN US WELL, MR. OSWALD. THEY WANT TO HURT US.

FUCK ME. OKAY...I NEED YOU TO UNWRAP ALL OF THESE THINGS AND START LAYING OUT THE KEY SHIT I NEED TO READ TO UNDERSTAND IT.

NO SPECULATION. NO CRAZY SHIT. YOU GOT ME?

CAN YOU...I DON'T LIKE CUSSING. I THINK IT'S A VULGAR WAY TO EXPRESS YOURSELF.

SORRY, KID. I'M A VULGAR SORT OF GUY.

BUT I'LL DO MY BEST, DOC. ALRIGHT? MAYBE YOU'LL RUB OFF ON ME.

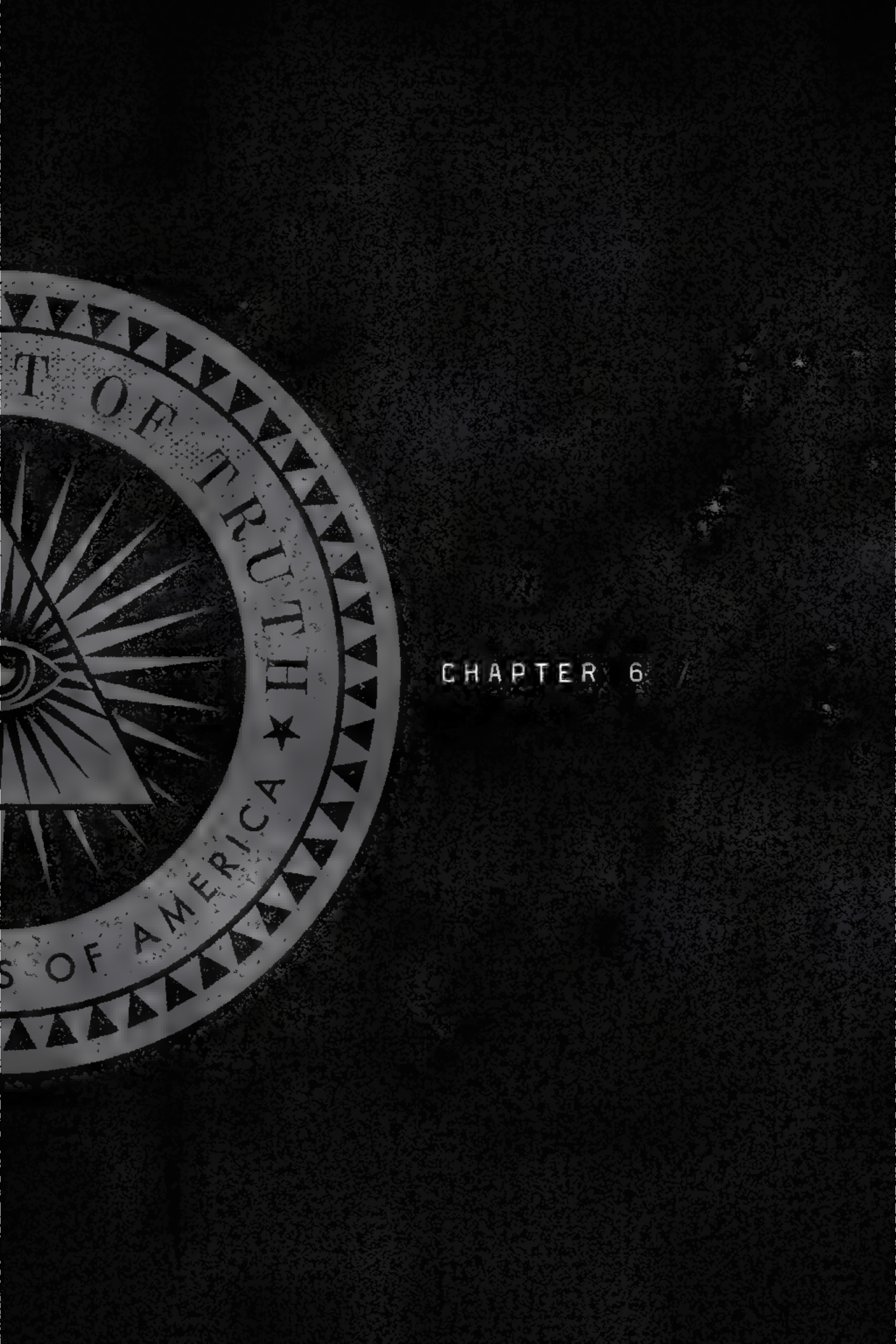
THE DIRECTOR PUT ME IN HERE SO I COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED LAST NOVEMBER IN DALLAS.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE WORLD IS IN THIS ROOM, DOC...BUT NONE OF IT HAS GOTTEN ME CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE ACTUAL MECHANICS. IT'S ALL THEORY. MAGIC BULLSHIT.

IF WE'RE REALLY GOING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ANY OF THIS MEANS, WE HAVE TO GO FURTHER THAN ANYONE IN OUR SHOES HAS GONE BEFORE.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

I MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME CATCH ONE OF THESE BASTARDS.



CHAPTER 6

WASHINGTON, D.C.
1987.

WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE TO BE A FLY ON THE WALL OF YOUR BRAIN RIGHT NOW.

YOU REACHING OUT BEYOND THE GRAVE TO BOOTH? COMPARING THE SIZE OF YOUR RIFLES?

COME OFF IT.

YOURS WAS BIGGER, FRIEND. I CAN GUARANTEE IT.

OH, JESUS.

TAKE THAT FUCKING HAT OFF, HAWK. IT'S DISRESPECTFUL.

THAT'S A JOKE, LEE. RIGHT? YOU'RE JOKING.

WE'RE SITTING IN THE SYMBOLIC HEART OF AMERICA. THIS PLACE **MEANS** SOMETHING TO PEOPLE. YOU CAN'T JUST SPIT IN ITS FACE.

OF COURSE I CAN. IT'S A FREE COUNTRY. I CAN DO WHATEVER THE FUCK I WANT.

WE HAVE PARTS TO PLAY IN THE STORY WE'RE TELLING.

WE DON'T ALL GET TO **KILL THE PRESIDENT.** WE HAVE TO TAKE OUR VICES WHERE WE CAN **GET** THEM, CHAMP.

HEH.

SHOW SOME GODDAMN DISCRETION.

TOLD YOU TO STOP CALLING ME THAT.

ALRIGHT, PATSY. LET'S COOL OUR JETS.

BUT THIS IS THE AGE OF *ME FIRST* MY WAY OR THE FUCKING HIGHWAY.

YOU STILL DON'T GET THE MODE OF THE AGE, LEE. YOU GET YOUR PANTIES IN A TWIST IF AUTHORITY FIGURES DON'T LOOK THE PART.

EXCEPT MAYBE YOU.

AND THERE'S NOBODY MORE FUCKING AMERICAN THAN ME.

HOW WAS NEW YORK?

DISGUSTING. JUST HOW WE WANT IT. GOT [redacted] MORE STORIES ABOUT URBAN DECAY COOKING, AND A FEW LESS ON CONTRA AND THE WHOLE AIDS SITUATION.

THE BALANCE IS GONNA HOLD.

I WANT IT TO DO MORE THAN HOLD, HAWK.

I NEED YOU TO GO TO MILWAUKEE. THERE'S A NEW PRESCHOOL CASE BREWING OVER THERE, AND I WAS READING SOME OF THE TESTIMONIES OF THE CHILDREN.

MOST OF THEM YOU COULD HAVE WRITTEN YOURSELF.

SUPPOSE I DID, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.

BUT THERE'S ONE THAT STOOD OUT IN THE LOT.

IT MIGHT GIVE US THE FOOTHOLD WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR TO TIP EVERY-THING OUR WAY.

...BUT THESE KIDS ARE RUNNING AROUND WITH KNIFE-HANDED NIGHTMARES AND HOCKEY-MASKED SERIAL KILLERS ON THEIR T-SHIRTS.

WE'VE GOT A LIVE ONE? A CANDIDATE FOR A FICTION?

IF WE CAN GET ENOUGH PEOPLE TO BELIEVE. IT'S GRUESOME...

WE GIVE THE MEDIA AN IMAGE THEY CAN RUN WITH...

YEAH, I HEAR YOU.

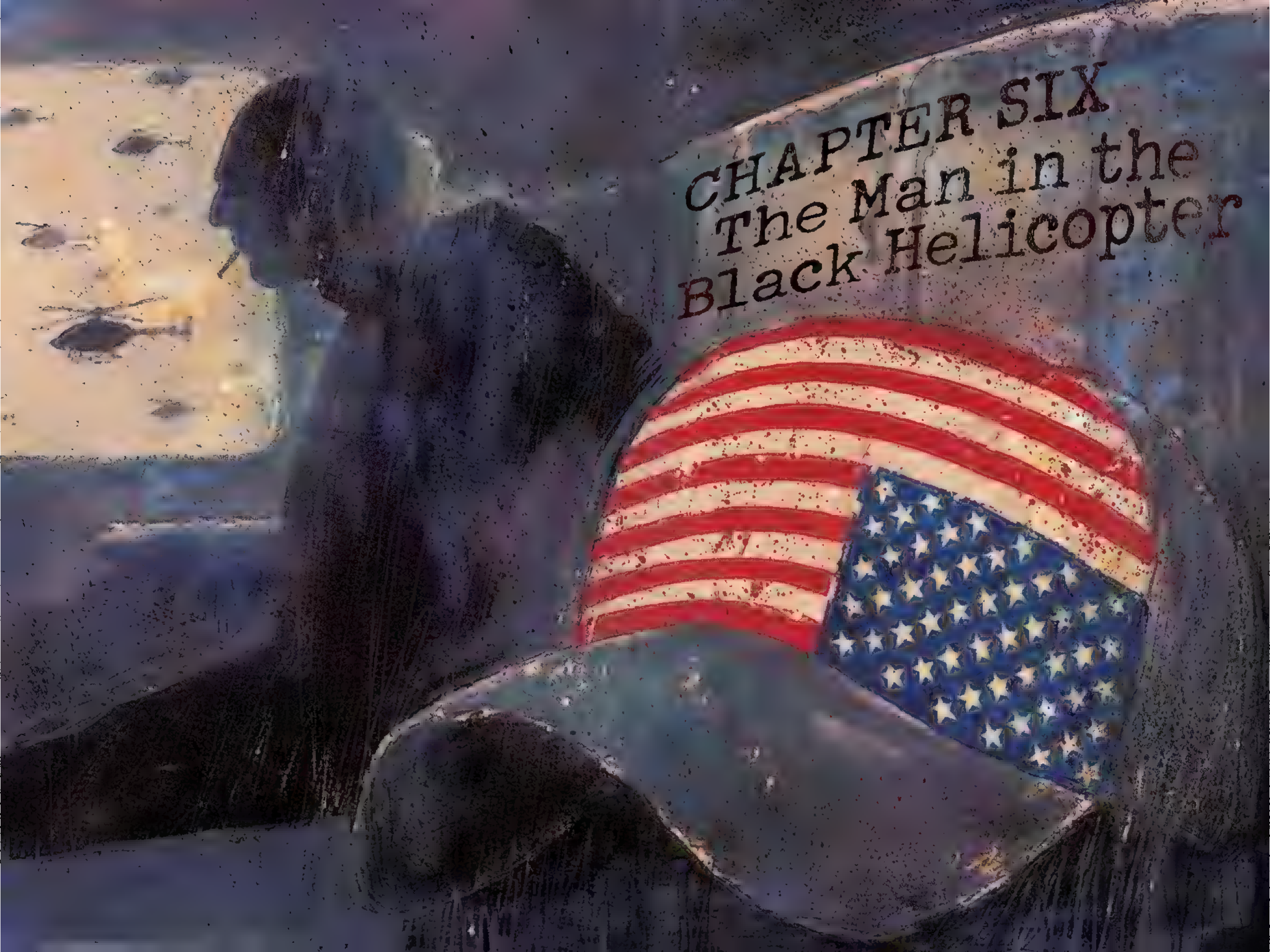
WHAT'S THE KID'S NAME?

COLE TURNER.

THE McMARTIN TRIAL IS JUST GETTING STARTED. IF WE DON'T PUSH THINGS, I'M WORRIED IT'LL ALL GO SIDEWAYS.

TURNER.

CHAPTER SIX
The Man in the Black Helicopter



NOW.

Did you see
it's important
that you see

I'm going to tell you a
secret. The big secret
that you've known you
entire life.

The more people believe
in something the more
that thing becomes
the more reality tips in

I think why this organization
exists. We have spent the last
century making sure that
conspiracy theories stay
conspiracy theories.

This isn't a clean job Cole
It's ugly. Because people are
ugly, and they can believe
terrible ugly things.

This is the one real
conspiracy out there.
The actual secret
history of the world.

There have been players in
every great civilization who
have known the true nature
of reality and who have
tried to play the pe
to empower themselves.

The Department of Truth
was not formed to uphold
our better fucking angels
or any stupid goddamn
shit like that.

You're the good
guys, right?

I think so.

BLAM
BLAM

YOU UP?

YEAH. I'M UP.

GOOD. WE'RE HERE.

SO, I NEED TO ASK YOU AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME **WEIRD** SHIT?

EXCUSE ME? ARE YOU JOKING?

DO I STRIKE YOU AS A PARTICULARLY FUNNY PERSON?

I MEAN... YOU HAVE YOUR MOMENTS. IN A WRY SORT OF WAY.

COLE...

HOW DO YOU MEAN, WEIRD?

I MEAN FUCKING WEIRD.

YOU RECRUITED ME FROM AN ICE WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD, JUST AFTER I SAW A WOMAN DRESSED IN RED WITH Xs FOR EYES.

FLAT EARTH IS STILL A PRETTY TAME THEORY, COLE. YOU KNOW THAT.

I SAW A NIGHTMARE I MADE UP WHEN I WAS A BOY STANDING IN MY KITCHEN LAST WEEK.

THIS ISN'T A CONTEST. YOU NEED TO LISTEN.

YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING CONSPIRACY THEORIES LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT ONCE YOU SCRATCH AN INCH BENEATH THE SURFACE, THINGS START GETTING FUCKING STRANGE.

AND AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH, WE HAVE TO GET PRETTY FUCKING STRANGE, TOO.

MY JOB, MOST OF THE TIME, STAYS SURFACE LEVEL.

I DO PREVENTATIVE WORK. I STOP FICTIONS **BEFORE** THEY MANIFEST IN REALITY.

THAT MEANS, MOST OF THE TIME, MY JOB IS TO DESTROY EVIDENCE THAT WOULD LEAD PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN DANGEROUS IDEAS THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO MANIFEST.

SOMETIMES, IF A SITUATION HAS GOTTEN TOO OUT OF HAND, MY JOB MEANS SILENCING PEOPLE WHO ARE SPREADING THOSE DANGEROUS IDEAS TOO EFFECTIVELY.

YOU MEAN YOU KILL THEM.

YES, COLE. I KILL THEM.

THAT'S WHY LEE SENT ME DOWN TO THE END OF THE WORLD. THOSE BILLIONAIRES WERE FUNDING FLAT-EARTH IDEOLOGY AND SPREADING IT TOO RAPIDLY. SO, I KILLED THEM.

BUT YOU'RE GOING TO LEARN PRETTY QUICK THAT THAT'S ONLY HALF OF WHAT THE DEPARTMENT DOES.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I DID THE DIRTY WORK, BUT YOU CAN'T WRITE AN OBITUARY THAT SAYS THAT TWO OF THE RICHEST MEN IN THE COUNTRY DIED IN ANTARCTICA IN FRONT OF AN IMPOSSIBLE ICE WALL.

OUR PEOPLE NEED TO CRAFT AND SPREAD A MUNDANE VERSION OF THE TRUTH FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD TO BELIEVE, SOMETHING THEY WON'T EVEN THINK TO QUESTION.

SO NOW, WE HAVE ONE BROTHER DEAD FROM A HEART ATTACK AND THE OTHER IN A HOSPITAL WITH TERMINAL CANCER. HE'LL DIE LATER THIS YEAR.

THE BODY THAT HIS FAMILY WILL GO AND VISIT IS A FICTION CREATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

AND THEN THERE'S A SIMILAR STORY THAT NEEDS TO BE TOLD FOR EACH OF THE DAMN FOOLS THEY CONVINCED TO FLY WITH THEM TO SEE IT WITH THEIR OWN EYES.

BUT THAT'S STILL THE SURFACE STUFF.

ASK THE BIGGER QUESTION. THE WEIRDER ONE.

HOW DO YOU GET RID OF AN IMPOSSIBLE ICE WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD?

EXACTLY.

THAT'S WHERE THE WEIRD SHIT COMES IN. AND THAT'S WHY LEE IS SENDING THE GUY IN CHARGE OF ALL THAT WEIRD SHIT OUT HERE TO MEET WITH US.

GOD HELP US.

I'M...STRUGGLING WITH THIS, RUBY. I REALLY AM.

I KNOW.

I STILL DON'T HAVE ANY STRAIGHT ANSWERS...AND THE MORE I LEARN, THE MORE IT SEEMS LIKE BARKER DIDN'T LIE TO ME ABOUT ANYTHING.

AND NOW, I'M A KILLER IN SERVICE OF KEEPING A CERTAIN VERSION OF REALITY, AND I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S THE RIGHT THING.

I THINK YOU'RE LETTING YOUR EMOTIONS AFFECT HOW YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT ALL OF THIS.

OF COURSE I AM.

A CHILD-EATING NIGHTMARE I HAD WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD IS LOOSE IN THE REAL WORLD, AND I MIGHT BE WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE WHO PUT HIM IN MY HEAD TO BEGIN WITH.

ALL I WANT IS TO LOOK AT THE ARCHIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH. I WANT TO SEE THE HISTORY OF THIS PLACE FOR MYSELF. I WANT TO KNOW IF WHAT I'M DOING IS RIGHT.

AND LEE ISN'T GOING TO LET YOU ANYWHERE **CLOSE** TO THOSE FILES UNTIL HE FEELS YOU OUT, COLE.

WOULD YOU GIVE A SUBORDINATE ACCESS TO YOUR MOST SECRET DOCUMENTS RIGHT AFTER HE HAD A SIT-DOWN WITH YOUR GREATEST ENEMY?

YOU NEED TO STOP SULKING.

and sharpened their teeth

-th. They were told not to harm the

I'M NOT SULKING.

YES, YOU ARE. BUT I NEED YOU TO FOCUS.

THIS PLACE IS **DANGEROUS.**

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THIS IS AN AIRPORT.

DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, COLE. DON'T TELL ME YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

IT ALWAYS STRUCK ME AS ONE OF THE LESS COHERENT OFFSHOOTS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER CONSPIRACY.

MORE LIKE A JOKE THAN ANYTHING PEOPLE WOULD LATCH ON TO.

YOU SHOULD DIG DEEPER. FOLKS TAKE NOTICE WHEN YOU SHUT DOWN A POPULAR AIRPORT RIGHT AT THE EDGE OF A CITY.

THEY LOOK EVEN CLOSER WHEN ITS REPLACEMENT IS TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES AWAY, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, WITH FEWER RUNWAYS THAN THE ORIGINAL.

AND THEN THEY FIND OUT ABOUT THE TIME THEY SPENT CONSTRUCTING FIVE MASSIVE BUILDINGS, ONLY TO BURY THE LOT OF THEM, DELAYING THE PROJECT BY YEARS.

AND THEY LEARN ABOUT THE CORNERSTONE DEDICATING THIS AIRPORT TO THE NEW WORLD AIRPORT COMMISSION, AN ORGANIZATION THAT DOES NOT EXIST.

NEW WORLD—

AND THEN THERE'RE THE TILES THAT READ "AU AG," SUPPOSEDLY IN REFERENCE TO THE AUSTRALIA ANTIGEN, ONE OF THE DEADLIEST VIRUSES MANKIND HAS EVER CONCOCTED.

THE BARBED WIRE FENCES THAT POINT IN INSTEAD OF OUT, LIKE A PRISON CAMP.

AND THOSE RUNWAYS I TALKED ABOUT EARLIER... VIEWED FROM ABOVE, THEY TAKE THE SHAPE OF A SWASTIKA.

THESE MURALS HERE... PEOPLE GET REAL EXCITED ABOUT THESE MURALS. WEIRD TO SHOW PICTURES OF GENOCIDE ON THE WAY TO THE BAGGAGE CLAIM, YEAH?

APPARENTLY THIS IS ALL TO REPRESENT THE WAY THEY'RE GOING TO DISMANTLE THE WORLD. THE GAS. THE CAMPS...AND THE WORLD THAT WILL RISE OUT OF IT. THE NEW WORLD ORDER.

THAT WEIRD FLOWER IS THE KICKER, SYMBOLIZING THAT THIS IS ALL IN SERVICE OF ALIENS OR SATAN, DEPENDING ON WHICH ARTICLES YOU READ.

NOW...IT'S ALL BULLSHIT, AND WE BOTH KNOW IT.

YOU CAN WALK RIGHT UP TO THE FENCES, AND THERE'S NOTHING WEIRD ABOUT THE BARBED WIRE. IT POINTS **UP** LIKE IT'S SUPPOSED TO.

THOSE BURIED BUILDINGS AND TUNNELS? THEY WERE TRYING OUT A FANCY NEW SYSTEM TO GET SUITCASES TO THE BAGGAGE CLAIM A BIT FASTER, AND IT DIDN'T WORK.

AND ANYONE WITH HALF A BRAIN CAN SEE THAT THE MURALS ARE JUST A NEW-AGE SENTIMENT ARGUING THAT OUT OF WAR COMES PEACE.

BUT WHAT ALL THAT AMOUNTS TO IS A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THAT DEEP UNDER THE AIRPORT IS THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE WORLD GOVERNMENT.

AND THAT SEEMS TO BE WHY BLACK HAT CHOSE IT AS ONE OF THEIR BASES OF OPERATIONS.

ONE OF THE CORE TENETS OF OUR KIND OF WORK IS LEANING INTO WHAT PEOPLE ALREADY BELIEVE. YOU CAN PIGGYBACK ON A RAW BELIEF AND TAKE THAT POWER INTO YOURSELF.

SO, LET'S SAY YOU'RE A CLANDESTINE ORGANIZATION TRYING TO TIP THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE WORLD...

WHY NOT SET UP OPERATIONS IN A PLACE THAT PEOPLE BELIEVE TO BE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER?

BUT THERE'S A PROBLEM...

THERE SHOULDN'T BE ENOUGH PEOPLE THAT BELIEVE IN THIS TO ACTUALLY MAKE IT MANIFEST IN REALITY.

THAT'S IT.

JUST LIKE THERE SHOULDN'T BE ENOUGH PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE STANLEY KUBRICK FAKED THE MOON LANDING, OR THAT CRISIS ACTORS STAGE MASS SHOOTINGS, OR ANY OF THE OTHER THINGS WE'VE SEEN BLACK HAT MANIFEST.

AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO FIGURE OUT.

YOU NEED TO FOCUS. I NEED YOU CLEARHEADED.

PLACES LIKE THIS ARE DANGEROUS BECAUSE THEY AREN'T REAL. THEY DON'T FOLLOW THE SAME LOGIC AS REAL PLACES.

YOU COULD GO DOWN A WRONG HALLWAY AND FIND YOURSELF STUCK IN A LABYRINTH THAT ONLY EXISTS BECAUSE A FEW PEOPLE IMAGINED IT DIFFERENTLY FROM THE REST AND I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN.

I CAN FOCUS.

THEN DO IT. HE'S ALMOST HERE.

DON'T TOUCH FUCKING ANYTHING. ESPECIALLY IF IT HAS A KEYBOARD OR A SCREEN. DOESN'T MATTER IF THAT SCREEN IS SHATTERED. DON'T TOUCH IT.

IT'S...UH... NICE TO SEE YOU, FRANK.

NO, IT FUCKING ISN'T.

RUBY?

I WON'T LET HIM TOUCH ANYTHING. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS HAPPENING?

I THINK HAWK IS GOING TO COME IN HERE AND FUCK UP ALL MY SHIT IF I DON'T GET THESE COMPUTERS OUT OF HERE FAST ENOUGH.

FAIR ENOUGH.

WHY ARE ALL OF YOU SO ANXIOUS ABOUT THIS HAWK GUY TURNING UP?

COME ON, COLE. I NEED YOU TO SEE SOMETHING ELSE BEFORE HE GETS HERE.

OKAY.

NOW... **THIS** IS THE WEIRD SHIT.

REPTILIANS...

HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH THE CONCEPT?

I MEAN...IT'S NOT THAT COMPLICATED, RIGHT? DAVID ICKE STARTED RECYCLING OLD ANTI-SEMITIC IDEAS WRAPPED UP IN SOME NEW-AGE UFO MYSTICISM.

A CABAL OF ALIEN SHAPE-SHIFTING LIZARD PEOPLE, COMPRISING THE WORLD ELITES, WHO CONTROL THE BANKS AND THE WORLD GOVERNMENTS.

LITERALLY REPURPOSED THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION AND SLAPPED LIZARD ALIENS ON THE LABEL.

WE THINK THIS IS WHERE THEY MANIFESTED THEM. ALL OF THE FICTIONS THEY'VE BEEN USING...

YOU CAN SEE THE REJECTS...THE HALF IDEAS. LEFT BEHIND AND READY TO BURN...

BUT THIS IS WHAT I WANTED YOU TO SEE...

WE THINK THIS IS WHERE THEY MANIFESTED YOUR STAR-FACED MAN.

HOW...HOW COULD THEY HAVE TAKEN A NIGHTMARE FROM MY CHILDHOOD AND MADE HIM REAL?

I DIDN'T EVEN BELIEVE IN HIM ANYMORE! I HADN'T SINCE I WAS A FUCKING KID!

I DON'T KNOW, COLE. I DON'T KNOW HOW BLACK HAT IS DOING **ANYTHING** THEY'RE DOING. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO TRY AND GET TO THE BOTTOM OF.

AIN'T THIS A FUCKING SURKY SIGHT.

WHAT...

SEEMS LIKE DENVER'S NO PLACE FOR A LIZARD MAN. EVEN IN THE AGE OF LEGAL WACKY TOBACKY.

COLE TURNER. THIS IS HAWK HARRISON.

I CAN HEAR THE ADULATION DRIPPING FROM EACH WORD, SUNSHINE, AND IT JUST MAKES MY HEART GROW FONDER. IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.

NO, IT HASN'T.

YOU'RE THE MAN WE WERE SENT HERE TO MEET?

I CERTAINLY AM. AND I AM **ALSO** PLEASED TO REPORT TO MR. GORBACHEV THAT I HAVE TORN DOWN THAT ICE WALL.

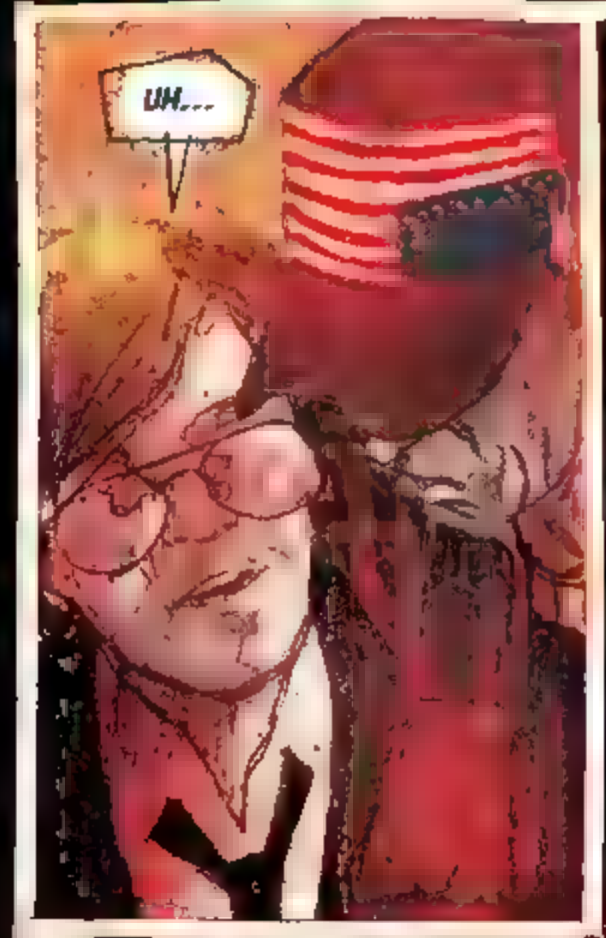
AS FAR AS UNCLE SAM IS CONCERNED, THE WORLD IS NOW AS ROUND AS A BEACH BALL.

HOW?

I'M THE MOTHERFUCKING MAGIC MAN OF THE D.O.T., KING COLE. DON'T YOU FORGET IT.

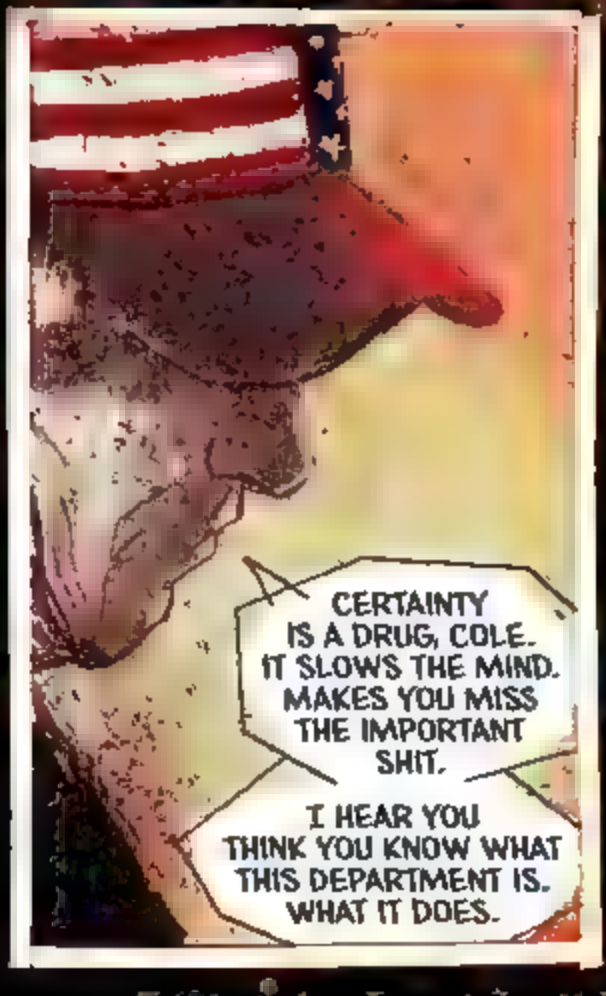
RUBY, HONEY, WHY DON'T YOU SCOOT FOR A BIT? I WANT TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH MY BOY HERE.

SHE LOVES ME. I TAUGHT HER EVERY GODDAMN THING SHE KNOWS, SO SHE PRETENDS SHE'S ALL ICE. BUT I SEE THROUGH TO THE RAGING FIRES WITHIN.


UH...

SHE'S BEEN FEEDING YOU ALL THE FUCKING ANSWERS, HASN'T SHE? BEEN FILLING YOUR HEAD WITH HER OWN FRAMING, SO YOU CAN'T SEE IT WITH YOUR OWN TWO EYES.

I THINK I SEE THINGS PLENTY CLEAR.


CERTAINTY IS A DRUG, COLE. IT SLOWS THE MIND. MAKES YOU MISS THE IMPORTANT SHIT.
I HEAR YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT THIS DEPARTMENT IS. WHAT IT DOES.

BUT I'VE BEEN WORKING HERE SINCE YOU WERE IN DIAPERS, AND I STILL DON'T HAVE A FUCKING CLUE WHAT WE ARE OR WHAT WE DO.

NOT WITH ANY CERTAINTY, ANYWAYS.

ALWAYS QUESTION AUTHORITY.

BELIEVE ME—I AM RIGHT NOW.

HAH! GOOD.

BUT I **DO** KNOW AN AWFUL LOT. ENOUGH TO GET ME INTO TROUBLE AND GET ME OUT OF IT AGAIN.

AND YOU SHOULD HEAR ME OUT WHILE YOU MAKE YOUR OWN MIND UP ON THINGS.

NOW, YOU SEE THIS PLACE AROUND YOU? THIS IMPOSSIBLE NOWHERE PLACE SOME RATFUCKER PULLED OUT OF THE WEIRDEST CORNERS OF THE INTERNET?

FOR MY NEXT MAGIC TRICK, I'M GOING TO MAKE IT DISAPPEAR.

I WANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN DO THAT. HOW YOU CAN BEND REALITY IN YOUR FAVOR.

NOT MY FAVOR, KID. AMERICA'S.

A PLACE LIKE THIS IS A CANCER ON THE AMERICAN DREAM, AND I'M THE SURGEON THAT KNOWS HOW TO CUT IT OUT.

BUT HOW... HOW CAN YOU TIP THE BALANCE?

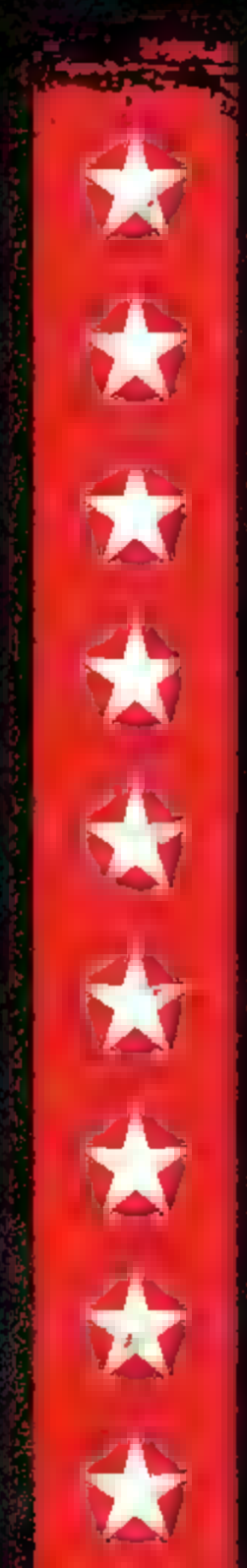
WITH PANACHE.

DON'T WORRY. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE. YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME DO IT. SO YOU BETTER WARM UP TO ME QUICK, SON.

YOU KNOW WHAT, KID? IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN WAITING TO MEET YOU ALL MY LIFE.

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth, the star was given the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them, only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion. During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces were like human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many chariots rushing into battle. They have tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they have the power to torture people for five months. They have as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek his name is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer).

CHAPTER 7



OKAY, COLE... LET'S CONTINUE... HOW DID YOU GET TO THE BASEMENT?

BEHIND... BEHIND WHERE THEY KEEP THE PLAY-DOH.

THE SHELF, HERE IN THIS PHOTO?

THERE WERE STAIRS THAT WENT DOWN. SECRET STAIRS. THEY SAID IT WAS **MAGIC.**

AND YOUR TEACHERS WOULD TAKE YOU?

THEY WOULD PICK US UP DURING NAPTIME AND THEY WOULD TAKE US DOWN THE SECRET STAIRS.

WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SECRET STAIRS?

IT WAS DARK, AND THE BABIES WERE CRYING.

HOW MANY BABIES WERE THERE?

I...

I DUNNO.

BUT YOUR TEACHER WAS THERE.

YEAH.

THEY WERE SAYING THE BABIES TASTED GOOD, AND WE SHOULD TASTE THE BABIES BECAUSE THEY TASTED LIKE HOT DOGS.

BUT THEY WERE CRYING AND THEY DIDN'T SMELL LIKE HOT DOGS.

"DID YOU EAT ANY?"

"HE SAID I HAD TO CLEAR MY PLATE."

"...I DIDN'T WANT TO. BUT THE MAN WAS THERE."

IN THE DRACULA CAPE?

THE STAR-FACED MAN WAS ANGRY THAT I DIDN'T WANT ANY.

MILWAUKEE, WI.
1987.

FUCK ME, THIS IS GOOD SHIT. BABIES EATING BABIES. IT'S SO LURID, WITHOUT ALL THE SEX STUFF THAT'LL MAKE THE NEWS CHANNELS NERVOUS.

DID THEY GET A DRAWING? PLEASE GOD, TELL ME THEY GOT THAT KID TO PUT SOMETHING ON PAPER.

HON, YOU'RE REALLY SITTING ON THE MOTHER LODE HERE. THIS COULD BLOW THE WHOLE THING WIDE OPEN... I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON OUR TEAM.

NOTHIN' TOO SPECIAL, HAWK.

GLAD TO BE OF HELP, HAWK. BUT WE HAVE TO BE DELICATE... I JUST GOT PLACED WITH THE BUREAU AND I DON'T WANT TO BLOW MY COVER THIS SOON.

OH, DARLING, I SWEAR I'M NOT THE COVER-BLOWING TYPE. NOT PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING, I SHOULD SAY.

YEAH... THIS WON'T DO. WE NEED TO GET HIM TO DRAW SOMETHING BETTER. SOMETHING A LITTLE MESSIER, A LITTLE SCARIER...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE DRAWING IN THE FUNNY PAGES ANYTIME SOON, MR. HARRISON.

MY FINGERPRINTS ARE ON ALL THE OTHER PAGES IN THE PAPER— WHY **NOT** THE FUNNIES?

NOW, HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO DO. I WANT TO SEE THIS KID MYSELF. SEE WHAT KIND OF CARTOONS HE WATCHES IN THE MORNING...

AND HOW DO YOU KNOW HE WATCHES CARTOONS, MR. HARRISON?

I KNOW BECAUSE THIS BOY IS A FINE YOUNG WHITE AMERICAN OF THE UPPER MIDDLE CLASS, AND THAT MEANS HE FUCKING LOVES HIS SATURDAY MORNING CARTOONS.

THE Fictions

WE'RE GOING TO SNEAK A FEW FRAMES OF THAT STAR-FACED MAN DRAWING INTO HIS FAMILY'S TV SIGNAL WHILE HE'S WATCHING HIS CARTOONS. JUST A FRACTION OF A SECOND, A COUPLE DOZEN TIMES OVER A FEW WEEKS.

AND MAYBE SLIP IN A FEW ADVERTISEMENTS OF OUR OWN MAKING WITH THIS SORRY MUG IN THE BACK-GROUND. ENOUGH FOR THE IMAGE TO **REALLY** SINK IN.

THEN WE ASK THE KID TO DRAW THIS STAR-FACED MAN AGAIN, AND HE'LL DRAW HIM RIGHT.

WE LEAK **THAT** PICTURE TO THE LOCAL PAPERS WITH THE NATIONALS ON STANDBY.

AND WE PLANT A FEW LOCAL NEWS STORIES IN...LET'S SAY, OKLAHOMA AND WASHINGTON, WITH OTHER KIDS DOING THEIR OWN DRAWINGS.

GET A NATIONAL MANHUNT GOING FOR THIS STAR-FACED MAN UNTIL HE BURNS INTO THIS COUNTRY'S PSYCHE.

THAT SOUNDS DOWNRIGHT DEVILISH, MR. HARRISON.

I'M NO DEVIL, MA'AM. I AM A PROUD AMERICAN.

PASS THIS UP THE LADDER BACK TO THE BOSS IN WASHINGTON. TELL HIM THAT HAWK HARRISON SAYS, *"PATSY, WE'VE GOT A WINNER."*

I THINK I CAN DO THAT.

OKAY, GOOD. NOW...TELL ME...

Where does this Cole Turner live?

Chapter Seven

THE DENVER WORKING

DENVER, CO.
Now.

ALRIGHT, KID. DON'T MAKE ME CROW LIKE A ROOSTER.

JESUS, FUCK!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM, HAWK?

DON'T GET YOUR PANTIES IN SUCH A TWIST.

HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE?

SON, I'VE BEEN IN INTELLIGENCE SINCE BEFORE YOU SQUIRTED OUT YOUR PAP. I CAN GET IN A FUCKING HOTEL ROOM.

I'VE BEEN READING YOUR EMAILS AND TEXT MESSAGES ALL NIGHT. DON'T SLEEP MUCH THESE DAYS, THOUGH I SUPPOSE I NEVER DID.

HAWK, I'M NAKED.

NOTHING I HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE. FUCK, NOTHING I HAVEN'T SEEN TONIGHT. LOOKS LIKE YOU AND YOUR PRETTY LITTLE BOYFRIEND TOOK SOME ARTSY-FARTSY NUDES A YEAR OR TWO BACK.

NOW, THIS MATT. HE'S A GROWER NOT A SHOWER, I'M GUESSING.

MATTY'S MY **HUSBAND.**

I HOPE THAT'S JUST A NICKNAME BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU AND HE DOESN'T ASK HIS FUCKING BOSS TO CALL HIM THAT. WHAT KIND OF LIMP-WRISTED NANCY SHIT IS IT TO CALL YOURSELF *"MATTY"*?

I'LL BE SURE TO PASS THAT ON TO MY GAY HUSBAND.

HAWK.

NOW, I KNOW YOU'RE FUCKING MAD, AND YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO BE. A MAN'S PRIVACY IS SACRED.

YOU'VE BEEN TALKING WITH THE BLACK HATS, AND PATSY WANTS ME TO PULL A DISAPPEARING ACT ON THEIR BASE. CAN'T HAVE YOU PLAYING DOUBLE AGENT.

BUT YOUR DEVICES SEEM CLEAN TO ME.

PATSY?

"I'M JUST A PATSY."

BE OUT FRONT IN FIFTEEN. WE'RE GOING SHOPPING.

ALRIGHT, COLE. LET ME ASK YOU THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION I'VE GOT. THE ONE THAT'S GOING TO SHAPE ALL OUR WORK FOR THE DEPARTMENT.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

IN WHAT CONTEXT?

IN ANY FUCKING CONTEXT, KID. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, HARRY POTTER? DO YOU BELIEVE IN GANDALF?

GANDALF ISN'T FROM HARRY POTTER.

LET ME PUT THIS A DIFFERENT WAY. PICK A CARD. ANY CARD.

OKAY.

PUT IT ON TOP OF THE DECK. FACEUP.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GUESS IT?

KID, THERE ARE ABOUT A HUNDRED WAYS FOR ME TO GAME A DECK TO KNOW WHAT CARD YOU PICKED.

BUT NONE OF THAT HAS A LICK TO DO WITH MAGIC. PUT THE FUCKING CARD FACEUP ON THE TOP OF THE DECK.

IT'S THE NINE OF CLUBS.

NOW TELL ME WHAT IT MEANS.

IT WOULD CORRELATE TO WHAT, THE NINE OF WANDS IN A TAROT DECK? I COULDN'T TELL YOU WHAT THAT MEANS, BUT WANDS ARE USUALLY POSITIVE, RIGHT? MALE CREATIVE FORCE VIA A PHALLUS.

NINE ISN'T A BAD NUMBER. A TRINITY OF TRINITIES? SO MAYBE IT'S REALLY GOOD LUCK, OR REALLY GOOD CREATIVE ENERGY...

OR MAYBE IT'S SAYING THAT I'M ABOUT TO HAVE SOME GOOD CREATIVE ENERGY, BECAUSE IT'S THE SECOND TO LAST NUMBER BEFORE THE FACE CARDS, OR THE MAJOR ARCANA.

YOU **DO** KNOW GANDALF, DON'T YOU?

I HAVE THE BASIC CONTEXT FOR TAROT BECAUSE I HUNG OUT WITH THE WEIRD THEATER KIDS IN MY MIDWESTERN HIGH SCHOOL, HAWK.

I READ THE CARDS WITH MY FRIENDS. I USED THE LITTLE BOOKLET THAT CAME IN THE BOX AT BORDERS BOOKS. MINE HAD SEXY DRAWINGS OF VAMPIRES ON THEM.

DID YOU BELIEVE?

NOT...NOT IN ANY SERIOUS WAY. IT'S ALL SO ABSTRACT. VAGUE, BUT UNIVERSAL ARCHETYPES.

YOU LAY A FEW CARDS DOWN IN A PARTICULAR ORDER, EACH REPRESENTING A BIG IDEA, AND THEN YOU GET TO DECIDE HOW IT RELATES TO YOU.

AND THE MORE YOU'RE IN A POSITION WHERE YOU **WANT** THE CARDS TO HAVE MEANING, THE MORE MEANING YOU GIVE THEM.

I DEFINITELY HAD MOMENTS WHERE I REALIZED THINGS ABOUT MYSELF USING THE CARDS, BUT I'VE HAD MOMENTS WHERE I REALIZED SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF ANSWERING A BUZZFEED QUIZ.

IT'S THE SAME THING. THE PERSON PROVIDES THE MEANING.

YOU'RE RIGHT AND YOU'RE WRONG. THE PERSON PROVIDES THE PERSONAL MEANING, BUT SOCIETY AND HISTORY GIVE THEM DEEPER MEANING.

THAT'S HOW AN IDEA BECOMES SOMETHING MORE THAN AN IDEA. HOW IT HOOKS INTO OUR SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND.

THE PAMPHLET IN YOUR VAMPIRE TAROT DIDN'T DECIDE THAT THE WAND IS A PHALLUS. THE FACT THAT A WAND LOOKS LIKE A BIG FUCKING **COCK** DID THAT.

WHEN YOU MAKE THE CONNECTION, YOU GIVE SOMETHING MEANING, AND WHEN MILLIONS OF PEOPLE MAKE A CONNECTION OVER TIME, THAT MEANING DEEPENS.

AWW, HERE WE GO. AIN'T THIS A BEAUT?

A SUITCASE WITH A FLAG ON IT? WHAT'S IT FOR?

YOU'LL SEE.

OKAY, SO YOU START WITH A SYMBOL, THEN YOU ADD IN CEREMONY. YOU BUILD RITUALS AROUND THE IDEA. THE WAND IS THE SYMBOL OF THE COCK, WHICH WE USE TO CREATE LIFE.

SOME FUCKING CAVEMAN SHAMAN STARTS CARRYING AROUND A BIG STICK BECAUSE HE'S SMARTER THAN THE OTHER CAVEMEN AND HE'S THE ONE WHO CAN TELL THEM WHAT THINGS MEAN.

NOW HARRY POTTER'S RUNNING AROUND WITH A LITTLE DICK IN HIS HAND SHOOTING OUT MAGIC CUM, AND THAT IMAGE CARRIES ALL THE MEANING OF ALL THOSE TEN THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY AND CONNECTIONS.

IT'S A SHORTCUT THAT CONNECTS YOU TO A LARGER CONTINUUM OF SYMBOLISM AND RITUAL.

CAN WE STOP TALKING ABOUT HARRY POTTER?

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT HARRY FUCKING POTTER. I'M TALKING ABOUT **MAGIC.**

THEN TELL ME—WHAT DO **YOU** THINK MAGIC IS?

IT'S KNOWING THE SHORTCUTS, THE SYMBOLS WE'VE BURNED INTO OUR BRAINS OVER CENTURIES, AND IT'S TRYING TO USE THOSE SYMBOLS TO NAVIGATE THE WORLD AND THE SELF.

DIFFERENT SOCIETIES HAD DIFFERENT BELIEFS...BUT IN THE END, THERE WERE STILL COMMON SYMBOLS WITH SHARED MEANINGS. LIKE THE SUN, OR WATER...

OR A BIG FUCKING JUICY COCK.

JESUS, HAWK.

WE AIN'T GOT TO HIM YET. JUST YOU WAIT.

YOU HAWK?

I JUST MIGHT BE.

YOU GOT THE CASH?

I SURELY DO.

WHAT ARE WE...?

WE'RE DOING A MAGIC TRICK, KID. COME ON. AIN'T YOU PAYING ATTENTION?

The early magicians, to my thinking, must have been people who knew the symbols and stories of the societies next door.

Ones who understood that the Pharaoh's got different gods from the Greeks, and they've got different gods from the Wildmen in the North with the pointy horned hats.

The folks who might come and say your neighbors have better gods than yours, and their rituals are more fun and their temples are better.

Or even worse, they might get you thinking about how strange it is that you both have gods for the sun even though there's only one sun.

Maybe that means the *symbol* is more powerful than the god.

The magicians are the ones who keep that secret knowledge. That occult knowledge. The understanding that the symbols run the show.

Now, let's fast-forward a bit. Because society works like that for most of history. But then the world starts getting a little bit more connected.

Christianity folds in a whole shit-ton of pagan ideas so the little people don't have to start changing their symbols for a weird religion from the East.

But they also start burning people alive if anyone keeps spreading the old pagan beliefs...and they start building a new figure out of pagan lore, from scraps of previously disconnected scripture.

Suddenly the Biblical Satan becomes the horned, cloven-hoofed Devil, and they use that symbol to make the little people fear all the pagan symbols that got wrapped up into him.

So the masses only believe what the church tells them is or isn't true.

But in the merchant class, there were still people who traveled the world, and saw evidence of the great old religions and their symbols.

And they started forming little social clubs, where they'd put on some silly costumes and perform silly little rituals based on their misunderstanding of old Egyptian or pagan rites.

Something a little naughty. A fun secret to share with pals, dressed up with pagan symbols.

The Freemasons.

Bingo. But now this is when things start to get weird, and enter our side of things...

People out there, they start getting wind of these secret societies of the elite. These social clubs with their fun little rituals.

These rich folk, they're playing games with the images that the priests are telling the little people are the most evil symbols in the world.

The common people start to worry that the wealthy and the powerful are worshippers of Satan.

Which sparks a whole new kind of curiosity, because now these social clubs aren't just social clubs—they're taboo...

Not just to the common folk, but to the aristocracy who all start to believe that there are people out there who actually might know and perform some kind of *real* magic.

Consider the woman known as *Madame Blavatsky*.

She claims to have traveled to Tibet, closed to the world in the mid-19th century, and to have learned from *hidden masters*, who would guide her to bring a message to the world...

That all religions are descended from a pantheist ur-religion, and that Christianity had hindered our connection to our true human potential.

She formed the *Theosophical Society* to spread these beliefs, a blend of Western esoteric knowledge, spiritualism, and a wild misappropriation of Eastern religious concepts that she fed eagerly to her hungry, wealthy audience.

And in London, you see the founding of the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, another group claiming to be in metaphysical communication with what they called the *Secret Chiefs*.

Now, and this is important here...At this point, we're talking about a bunch of smart fucking nerds reading about obscure religious beliefs and *imagining* stuff together...

These were the nerdiest Freemasons who wanted to spend their time talking about magic symbols and form their own club in British high society.

Then there comes a young man named Aleister Crowley.

He wants to join the Order and pals up with one of its founders, but he wants to get into the heavy stuff right away.

He wants to play with the real magic, and push the limits to see what all it can do. This ruffles the feathers of the old nerds, and they throw him out.

So he goes off into the world to learn what he can on his own.

NOW, LET'S GET A LITTLE CONTEXT FOR YOU HERE. THE LENS OF A WORLD WHERE COLLECTIVE BELIEF SHAPES REALITY.

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ENOUGH PEOPLE TO TIP THE SCALES OF BELIEF AND RESHAPE THE WORLD WITH WHAT CROWLEY AND THESE OTHER FOLKS CONSIDER TO BE MAGIC.

THE SPREADING BELIEF IS THAT THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE POWERFUL AND THE OCCULT--THAT THERE ARE SECRET DARK FORCES INFLUENCING THE RULERS OF THE WORLD--AND THAT SCARES THE **SHIT** OUT OF PEOPLE...

WE'RE ALSO SEEING THE DAWN OF SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR WRITING IN THE WILD, WHICH ALL SEEMS UNIFORMLY AFRAID OF PEOPLE MESSING AROUND WITH OCCULT KNOWLEDGE...

Like raising the dead in *Frankenstein*, or attracting the attention of a forgotten ancient monster from the East in *Dracula*.

We're not far out from H.P. Lovecraft dreaming up a whole universe of stories about amoral scientists in universities tapping into the ancient cosmic horrors we dare not look at.

But the world is smaller than it has ever been. Stories spread from one side of the world to the other like never before, and these occultists become curiosities...

Museums in New York and London start to fill with artifacts from Egypt and the Orient. Photographs bring images of impossible other worlds across the globe and more and more people know how to read.

THE COMMONALITY OF ALL ESOTERIC THOUGHT BEFORE THE 20TH CENTURY IS A KIND OF UNIVERSALIST IDEA, THAT UNDERNEATH ALL RELIGION IS ONE RELIGION SHARING ITS SYMBOLS, AND THAT THAT SHOULD CALL FOR A KIND OF UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

BIG KUMBAYA, LET'S LOVE EVERYBODY KIND OF THING, RIGHT? CROWLEY IS WHERE THAT MISSION CHANGES.

HERE. HAND ME THE BAG.

I DON'T SEE WHAT ANY OF THIS HAS TO DO WITH...

WE'RE GETTING THERE. WE'RE GETTING THERE.

LET'S GET TO A BAR. I WANT YOU TO ORDER ME THE FAGGIEST DRINK YOU CAN THINK OF.

ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?!

NOW, WHERE WAS I?

YOU WERE BEING HORRIBLE.

I LIKE THE FRUITY DRINKS BUT I NEVER REMEMBER THE NAMES.

I JUST DRINK BEER.

YOU MIGHT JUST BE MOST BORING QUEEN ALIVE, BUT THEN AGAIN YOU'RE FRESH OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT. YOU HAVEN'T REALIZED THAT YOU'RE ALLOWED TO LET YOUR FREAK FLAG FLY, IF YOU HAVE ONE.

PLEASE STOP. YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT CROWLEY.

Yeah. Crowley. I fucking *love* Crowley. So many of these assholes take themselves so seriously without ever trying anything.

They just want to jerk off pretending they're talking to a demon. And sure, Crowley did that too...But now he's untethered and looking to make his mark.

And he performs an evocation, bringing forth an entity called Aiwass. And that entity recites an entire book to him. And that book...*hoo boy*...it changes things.

In *The Book Of Law*, Crowley announces that the old Aeon of Osiris had come to an end, and the Aeon of Horus had begun.

That the old laws of self-sacrifice and submission that had dominated human thinking for generations were over, and it was time for an age of self-realization and self-indulgence.

Crowley named himself the *Great Beast 666*, the embodiment of the figure from Christian Revelation, and spoke of his counterpart...

The Scarlet Woman called Babalon, who will help him usher in this new era.

AND HE COINED THE CORE TENET OF HIS BELIEF SYSTEM, THELEMA, AND THE DRIVING MANTRA OF THIS NEW AGE:

"DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW."

SCARLET WOMAN... DID...HE SEE **HER**? DID HE KNOW?

AIN'T THAT A GREAT FUCKING QUESTION, KID.

AL CROWLEY HERE WAS A WEIRD FUCKING PERVERT, AND HE WANTED TO BE THE BIGGEST FUCKING PERVERT THAT EVER WALKED THE EARTH.

HE HOPED THAT IF EVERYONE THOUGHT HE WAS THE WICKEDEST MAN IN THE WORLD, THAT WOULD GIVE HIM POWER, AND IT DID.

He was in Berlin during the rise of Nazism, then fled to Britain to aid the intelligence services there.

He knew how the world worked in the way we know how the world works, and he helped the Allies understand to some degree what the Nazis were doing to the world.

The Nazis were using symbols and storytelling to make the world believe they were unstoppable, and that *made* them unstoppable. It was their own kind of black magic.

Stepping into what people believed.

The work he did with the Brits is what tipped off the faction of Americans who would go on to found the Department of Truth. Not that any of the founders thought his beliefs were credible.

SEE, THE MAGIC FOLKS DON'T LIKE ME BECAUSE I THINK MOST OF THEM ARE FULL OF SHIT.

YOU CAN TAKE ALL THE DRUGS YOU WANT AND GET FUCKED UP THE ASS UNTIL YOU SEE A FUCKING DEMON, BUT THAT'S JUST BECAUSE WE'VE GOT WHOLE FUCKING UNIVERSES INSIDE OUR BRAIN AND IF YOU CAN TRAIN IT, YOU CAN MAKE YOUR BRAIN DO WEIRD STUFF...

WHAT CROWLEY DID WAS MAKE THE WHOLE FUCKING WORLD PLAY INTO HIS MAGIC. HE SAW THE COMING AGE..."*DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW.*"

TOOK AYN RAND A THOUSAND FUCKING PAGES TO SAY THE SAME FUCKING SHIT.

HELL, THEY OUGHT TO PUT THAT INTO THE FUCKING PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. MAKES ME WANT TO STAND AND SALUTE.

I'M LEAVING. I'M SICK OF THIS...

NO, YOU'RE NOT.

THEN TELL ME WHAT THE HELL WE'VE BEEN DOING ALL DAY TODAY. TELL ME WHAT ANY OF THIS HAS TO DO WITH MAKING THE BLACK HAT BASE DISAPPEAR.

YEAH, YEAH, WE'RE GETTING RIGHT BACK INTO THE GOOD SHIT, AREN'T WE? WE GOTTA GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO BLAVATSKY.

SHE'S THE ONE WHO BRINGS TIBETAN BUDDHISM INTO THE SPIRITUAL MIX, LINKING IT TO HER METAPHYSICAL HIDDEN MASTERS.

THERE'S A STORY IN THE *KALACHAKRA TANTRA* THAT SPEAKS OF A MAGICAL CITY CALLED SHAMBHALA, WHERE THE BUDDHA WILL EMERGE AFTER THE WORLD DESCENDS INTO WAR AND GREED. BLAVATSKY TIED HER MASTERS TO THE MYTH, STARTING DECADES OF MAGICIANS WITH HUGE BONERS FOR TIBETAN MYSTICISM.

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, THEOSOPHISTS STARTED TRANSLATING THE TEXTS OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM INTO ENGLISH THROUGH THE LENS OF THEOSOPHY.

THEY BLEND A FEW DIFFERENT CONCEPTS TOGETHER INTO SOMETHING NEW WITH LITTLE PRECEDENT IN TIBETAN MYSTICISM.

I'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT IT'S A BASTARDIZATION OF A FEW LINES FROM THE *TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD.*

THEY CALLED IT A TULPA, OR A THOUGHTFORM...AN EXTERNALIZED MANIFESTATION OF SOMETHING INSIDE YOUR MIND.

NOW, AIN'T THAT JUST WHAT CROWLEY'S BEEN DESCRIBING WITH HIS EVOCATIONS? COMMUNICATING AND INTERACTING WITH THOUGHTFORMS TO GIVE YOU GUIDANCE?

SO HOW IS IT ALL CONNECTED?

I'M SAYING THAT EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING. IT'S A CONTINUUM OF KNOWLEDGE AND SYMBOLS WITH POWER, AND IF YOU LEAN INTO THAT POWER YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

I CALL MYSELF A MAGICIAN, BUT I'M A BIT MORE OF A HATCHET-MAN. I KNOW THE HISTORY, I KNOW THE SYMBOLS, AND I USE THEM TO DO THE WORK I DO.

LET'S SAY YOU HAVE A WALL AT THE END OF THE WORLD. BLACK HAT'S BEEN USING COMPUTERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA, BUT I STILL RELY ON AN OLDER BAG OF TRICKS BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T FAILED ME YET.

THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT, I HAVE PEOPLE IN EVERY NEWS STATION IN THE COUNTRY. DON'T NEED AS MANY AS I USED TO, MIND YOU, BUT I CAN STILL TIP THE BALANCE.

I MAKE SURE THE LOCAL NEWS STATIONS ACROSS AMERICA START SHOWING SOME IMAGES OF THE EARTH FROM SPACE.

STORIES ABOUT SATELLITES, AND THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION, AND MAYBE SEE IF I CAN GET AN INTEREST PIECE DONE ABOUT THE McMURDO BASE DOWN THERE. HIGHLIGHT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST TREK TO THE SOUTH POLE.

AND I ADD SOME LITTLE TREATS IN BETWEEN THE FRAMES. SUBLIMINAL IMAGES OF SIGILS TIED TO WHAT I WANT THEM ALL TO BE THINKING ABOUT. WHAT I WANT THEM TO BELIEVE.

AND I PUT THE SAME FUCKING IMAGES IN EVERY PAY-PER-VIEW PORNO IN THE COUNTRY. SO EVERY-ONE'S JERKING OFF TO THE THOUGHT OF A NICE ROUND EARTH.

I'VE GOT LOTS OF MAGIC WANDS AT WORK FOR ME EVERY GODDAMN DAY.

SO, WHAT STORY DO YOU PLANT TO GET RID OF THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER?

HEY, FRIEND. WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO PUT ON THE NEWS?

—REPORTS THAT A BOMB HAS GONE OFF AT THE **DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT** AT THE TOP OF THE HOUR. AIR TRAVEL HAS BEEN SUSPENDED—

YOU... BOMBED AN AIRPORT.

I BOMBED SOME SUITCASES, KID. DON'T GET YOUR PANTIES IN A TWIST. MAYBE THERE WAS AN UNLUCKY DOG OR TWO IN STEERAGE, AND THE GUY DRIVING THE LUGGAGE CAR MIGHT HAVE TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL.

EVERY NEWS STATION WILL RUN FOOTAGE OF BORING UNDERGROUND TUNNELS FILLED WITH LUGGAGE.

WHILE MY PERVERT ARMY CRANK THEIR YANKS TO MY SIGILS.

SPEAKING OF WHICH. I'VE GOT A FUCK-TON OF PHONE CALLS TO MAKE TO GET THOSE STORIES COOKING. PROBABLY HAVE TO TWIST A FEW ARMS IN DENVER PROPER WHILE I'M AT IT.

YOU'VE GOT THE REST OF THE NIGHT OFF. SPEND IT LEARNING SOME BETTER FAG DRINKS FOR ME TO ORDER THE NEXT TIME YOU TAKE ME OUT.

WAIT...

DOES **LEE** BELIEVE ANY OF THIS SHIT?

IN WHAT CONTEXT?

I'M BEING SERIOUS... IF THIS IS THE FRAME-WORK FOR EVERYTHING...

YOU'RE STILL LOOKING FOR THE *WHY*, AND THE WHY ISN'T AN ANSWER YOU'RE EVER GOING TO GET. THE WORLD IS HOW IT IS. MAGIC IS A HOW, NOT A WHY. IT'S A WAY OF THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE DO.

LEE HATES ALL THIS SHIT, BUT HE LIKES RESULTS SO HE INDULGES ME. AND IN THE THIRTY YEARS I'VE BEEN WITH THE DEPARTMENT, I'M THE BEST HE HAS.

SO WHAT CONTEXT DOES HE BELIEVE IN?

BACK IN 1967, HE AND DOC HYNES TRIED TO CREATE A TULPA OF THEIR OWN. THEY WANTED TO CATCH A UFO. SET UP A WHOLE OPERATION IN WEST VIRGINIA TO DO IT.

IT DIDN'T GO THE WAY THEY PLANNED. THERE WAS A BIG BRIDGE ACCIDENT--FORTY-SIX PEOPLE DIED.

And what they created wasn't no UFO.

LEE BELIEVES IN A SCARLET WOMAN TRYING TO USHER IN SOME NEW AGE. I THINK THAT'S WHY HE DECIDED YOU WERE SPECIAL.

YOU KNOW, OUT OF THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH, THERE ARE ONLY THREE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SEEN THE SCARLET WOMAN. YOU, LEE, AND RUBY.

RUBY'S SEEN HER?

NOT MY STORY TO TELL, KID.

BUT ME, I THINK THAT'S WHY HE PARTNERED THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER.

MAYBE YOU'RE THE ONES WHO WILL SUCCEED WHERE I FAILED.

MAYBE YOU'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT SHE WANTS WITH THIS COUNTRY.

CHAPTER 8
PART 1

NOW, I WANT YOU TO GET A NICE BIG PICTURE, EVAN. GOOD AND UGLY.

YES, MA'AM.

BIG ENOUGH FOR ME TO PUT UP HERE ON THE WALL.

I'LL DO MY BEST.

YOU KNOW WHAT FRED SAYS?

OH, LEAVE ME OUT OF IT, BILLIE.

FRED SAYS THAT THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GETTING A SHOT OF BIGFOOT IS IF HE GETS THE OLD GORILLA SUIT OUT OF THE ATTIC.

ISN'T THAT A RIOT? LIKE HE WAS THE ONE WALKING ALL FUNNY IN THAT OLD VIDEO, WAS HIS MEANING. ISN'T THAT A HOOT?!

YES, MA'AM.

YOU KNOW I'M PLAYING WITH YOU. YOU KNOW I'M A BELIEVER.

I DO.

I PACKED YOU AN EXTRA SANDWICH BECAUSE YOU'RE GETTING TOO SKINNY, EVAN. THE MISSUS CAN'T LIKE THAT.

NO, MA'AM.

YOU STOP BY ON THE WAY BACK HOME, NOW, SO I KNOW YOU'RE SAFE AND SOUND.

I WILL. THANK YOU.

YOU SHOULDN'T HUMOR HIM SO MUCH.

I JUST THINK SOME FOLKS NEED TO HEAR A NICE WORD EVERY NOW AND THEN.

HEY THERE, PRETTY LADY...COULD WE GET SOME **FRESH** COFFEE THIS TIME AROUND? BIT EARLY TO BE SHITTING OUT LIQUID CARDBOARD.

I THOUGHT WE HAD A WORD ABOUT THAT **HAT** OF YOURS.

WE CERTAINLY DID. I HAVE A FEW WORDS OF MY OWN, AND YOU CAN HEAR THEM IF YOU ASK ME TO TAKE MY HAT OFF AGAIN.

AND SOME FOLKS NEED JUST THE OPPOSITE OF A KIND WORD, BUT YOU DIDN'T HEAR THAT FROM ME.

YES, MA'AM.

CAN YOU PLEASE STOP ANTAGONIZING THE LOCALS?

I CERTAINLY CAN. WON'T, THOUGH. A LITTLE ANTAGONISM KEEPS THEM ON THEIR TOES.

ARE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU MADE ME FLY TO RURAL OREGON IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? I HAVE A FEELING IT'S NOT TO HAVE DINER EGGS AT SIX IN THE MORNING.

I'VE BEEN TELLING YOU. I'M TAKING YOU HUNTING.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE FUCKING WITH ME. HAWK, I'M WEARING LOAFERS.

AND WASN'T **THAT** A DUMB FUCKING DECISION, *HUH?*

MA'AM.

WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH BLACK HAT, OR THE BASE UNDER THE AIRPORT?

IT DOESN'T. THIS SIDE OF THE JOB IS FAR ON THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM FROM THE REST OF THAT CRAP. BUT IT'S KEY TO UNDERSTANDING HOW IT ALL WORKS.

I'VE GOT EVERYTHING COOKING NICE IN DENVER. IT'LL TAKE A FEW WEEKS AND SOME TOUCH-UPS, BUT THIS IS THE BORING PART. THE WAITING GAME.

USA NEWS

INVESTIGATION INTO DENVER AIRPORT BOMBING POINTS TO WHITE SUPREMACIST CELL

I PUT A WORD OUT ON DAY ONE OF BABYSITTING YOU THAT I WANTED TO TAKE YOU ON A HUNT. I WAS WORRIED IT WAS GOING TO BE SOME BORING WISHY-WASHY SHIT.

BUT YOU LUCKED OUT, SON.

THEN WHY DON'T I FEEL LUCKY?

BECAUSE YOU KIDS ARE ALL WHINY FUCKING BABIES THESE DAYS AND DON'T LET YOURSELVES GET LOST IN THE MAJESTY OF IT ALL.

HAWK...

YEAH, YEAH. OKAY.

BACK IN THE 1950s, ABOUT A DECADE AFTER THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH GETS FOUNDED, THEY START REALIZING THE SCOPE OF WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO NEED TO BECOME.

THAT'S WHEN THEY HIRED THE FIRST RANGER OF WHAT WE CALL THE FIELD OFFICE.

AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

SAME THING YOU'RE GOING TO DO WITH ME TODAY.

WE'RE GONNA KILL OURSELVES A BIGFOOT.

MA'AM. YOU HAVE A BLESSED DAY.

A Hunter's
Diary

~~My for~~

~~This was for~~

Your grandpa came home late one night with wildness in his eyes, and not the kind of wildness that comes from drink. I was twelve and one-half years old, your Uncle Bobby was about nine, and I think your Aunt Sally would have been around seven. Though I admit I could have ALL our ages wrong.

When you get old, it's funny the parts of memories that fall away. I couldn't place it in time, tell you what month it was or nothing like that. I mostly remember what I felt when I saw his wild eyes as he shook me awake and told me that he needed to show me something. I saw my mom watching from the kitchen table as I sleepily put on my jacket, angry as she told him not to wake the younger kids with this shit nonsense. I think I was a sort of compromise. I think she thought I was old enough to see through what my dad had told her. I remember her eyes, too. The sadness in them. It wouldn't be the last time I saw that sadness.

It was a long drive out to the hunting grounds. He was talking the whole time, but I don't know that I'd been listening then. I can imagine what he was saying from where I'm sitting now. He'd be saying that he didn't want me to think that he was crazy, that he'd think he was crazy too if he was in my shoes. I'm pretty sure he said some cruel things about my mother and that he wanted to take us all out here so we could share this night together.

My dad had hung his spare tire off the mile marker so he could find the exact spot where he'd parked earlier. I remember before he went into the woods, he kneeled in front of me and he told me that what he had seen out there was important. That it ~~was~~ might be the key to all of human existence. THE MISSING LINK!

But there was a quality to his voice, where I could tell even then that he wished he knew what he was talking about. He had felt something and he didn't have words for what he had felt, or words to convey what he wanted me to feel.

We walked for what felt like hours into the dark woods, though who knows how long it really was. I was tired and my arms and legs ached, and I didn't understand what we were doing. What I noticed first, well before the clearing, was the smell. There was burnt metal tangy in my nostrils, and my nose started bleeding at the smell of it. Then there was this strange, heavy musk. It was like wet dog, sweat, and vomit all rolled up in one. There was something sweet in it, too. It made my head feel heavy. Like I was walking through a dream.

Everything felt more real and less real all at once, and it's like the woods around me sharpened into focus. It was the middle of the night but I could see in the dark, and everything seemed far away. My pop was smiling then. The smell hardened his resolve. If there was any part of him that worried he'd gone mad, it went away then.

He started talking about how he had seen it walking through. That it must have been eight feet tall, and strong, and covered in hair. I didn't know what he was talking about, until he showed me the footprint in the soft clay of the forest floor. It was like a man's foot, but stranger. Wider, longer.

My father let me get close enough to place my smaller boy's foot next to the tracks of the giant to consider its bigness compared to mine. My father sat with me on a fallen tree trunk looking at the footprint for an age. It was the first time I had ever seen him cry. He was sobbing so hard he was shaking.

He was saying that for so much of his life, he had just felt unremarkable but now he had borne witness to something way bigger than him and there was proof of that sitting in front of the two of us. Tomorrow he would come back with whatever he needed to do a plaster cast of the footprint, and then he'd call the press and the scientists and whoever else there was to call. He would show my mom. He would show my siblings. It was going to be the beginning of a new life for our family.

After he was done crying and talking, we just looked at the footprint quietly for a long while. Contemplating. On the ride back home, the rain started. He made a little joke about how he should have thought to bring a tarp and put it down. Then the rain got heavier. My father's face got stony and silent, and he started to cry again. But he was right. That night was the beginning of a whole new life for our family.

HEY KID. IT'S YOUR POP.

JUST...*UH*...WANTED TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE CALL, BEFORE I GO INTO THOSE WOODS AND THERE'S NO GOOD SIGNAL. I'VE BEEN OUT THERE EVERY DAY THE LAST WEEK, AND, *UH*...

I'M FEELING REALLY GOOD ABOUT THIS. I...*UH*... I THINK...I THINK I'M REALLY ONTO SOMETHING, AND I JUST WISH YOU COULD SEE THE EVIDENCE I'VE GOT PILING UP HERE.

I'M GOING TO SHOW THOSE BOYS ON THE MESSAGE BOARDS WHO KNOWS A THING OR TWO. THEY WON'T BE LAUGHING MUCH LONGER.

I'VE SEEN THIS ONE'S TRACKS AND SCAT, AND I KNOW IT'S IN THIS RANGE. I THINK I GOT A GOOD SENSE OF WHERE IT SLEEPS, AND WHERE IT FEEDS.

DAD...I TOLD YOU...YOU CAN'T JUST CALL LIKE THIS.

YOU HAVE TO LET IT GO. IT'S ALL MADE UP. IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD. PLEASE, GO BACK TO THE DOCTOR...

ANYWAYS...I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO PROVING THOSE MESSAGE-BOARD BOYS WRONG. I'M GOING TO FIND SOMETHING REAL OUT THERE. I CAN FEEL IT.

AND IF I DO, I'LL COME SHOW IT TO YOU, OKAY? IF YOUR MOM SAYS... I MEAN, YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH NOW.... I DON'T KNOW.

I JUST WANT YOU TO SEE.

YEAH. OKAY, DAD. IF YOU FIND SOMETHING GOOD.

I LOVE YOU, HENRY.

I KNOW, DAD.

AND HERE'S THE BELLE OF THE BALL HERSELF.

DAUGHTER OF THE FIRST RANGER OF THE DEPARTMENT. I IMAGINE YOU MET THE TALKING REFRIGERATOR SHE CALLS A BROTHER BACK AT HQ.

NOW, HAWK. I WON'T HAVE YOU TALKING LIKE THAT ABOUT HUNKY.

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M COLE.

NAME'S DARLA.

DON'T LOOK HER STRAIGHT IN THE EYES. SHE'LL BITE YOUR NOSE CLEAN OFF.

HE'S NOT JOKING, KID.

THE FUCK ARE YOU WEARING?

HE DIDN'T TELL ME WHY WE WERE COMING HERE...

YOU POOR THING. I THINK I GOT SOMETHING IN THE TRUCK.

NOT GOING TO BE FLATTERING. BUT WE SHOULD GET A MOVE ON. IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG DAY.

OF COURSE IT IS.

He was gone for four days after the rain.

Mom ended up calling the police. They came and asked me questions and I told him that my daddy had proof that there was a Bigfoot out in those woods off the highway. The policemen barely tried not to laugh.

Afterwards my mother shouted at me in the kitchen for an hour straight, and when I insisted I had seen what I had seen, she started crying and talked about taking me to the sh doctor.

When Dad finally came home, his clothes were caked in mud, he had more stubble on his face than I had ever seen, and his eyes were red and raw. He showered, put on new clothes, and left again within an hour.

My mother shouted at him in the driveway, saying that he had lost his mind, and he said that he'd be back with proof.

It got worse after that.

Dad had a job at a lumberyard, and I was told the foreman had found him out in the forest looking for more tracks and given him an ultimatum about going home. Dad struck the foreman in the face and knocked out his front teeth, but the foreman was bigger and managed to drag him back to the car and drive him home.

The next few years were all a blur. My father would drink through the week, leave to scour the woods every Friday night, and come back late on Sunday.

There were rules in the house. He wasn't allowed to bring up the subject, particularly in front of us children. My mother wouldn't say the word "Bigfoot," asking him instead if he was going to see "his friend" this weekend.

There was a mocking tone in her voice that made me feel so rotten, like she wanted him to feel small. Like she wanted him to know that she thought he was crazy.

I would get angry and defend him, and say that I had seen the footprint, I had smelled it out there, and then she would yell at me, and my brother and sister would start crying, and my dad would just look even smaller. Like he was shrinking away, turning into nothing.

I remember a night he got drunk and came into my bedroom and just sat on the foot of my bed and asked me with the saddest look on his face if I really remembered, or if I was just defending him.
I told him that I did remember. That I would never forget my footprint next to it, or that smell or anything else. That I would always believe him.

I remember hugging my dad as he cried and cried, and I cried too because I didn't understand his sadness. In the months that followed, I would ask him sneaky questions when my mother couldn't hear. I'd ask what color its fur was when we were at a hardware store, and he'd perk up a little, and find a reddish brown color and say that that was the one. I'd draw little pictures of Bigfoot heads on scraps of paper and ask if I was drawing its face right. If it had hair on its face, or just around it like a gorilla.

I think my dad just liked being asked normal questions about it, but he always got sad after. And then he'd tell me that I shouldn't think about Bigfoot or draw it anymore. Your Uncle Bobby would rat me out to Mom and I'd hear her and Dad shouting all night. Dad would defend himself by saying that he told me not to draw them, and I'd want to go and tell her that he was right.

I don't know. Sometimes I feel like I'm being unfair to Mom... Things had been so happy before the night Dad saw Bigfoot. I can't imagine what it was like for her to see him become unmoored, and to take me with him. I can't imagine what she felt, that the mood just kept getting worse and worse in the house.

My dad started looking hollower and hollower. The day he took his life, I was at a summer sports camp. It must have been a year / year and a half after the night and the footprint. My counselor sat me down and told me, and they cried more than I did.

When I got home, I found that my mom had ransacked my bedroom and taken all my Bigfoot sketches. Your Uncle Bobby told me she burned them, and told me he'd burn me too if I ever brought the creature up again.

I say this all so you know that I do understand, son. I know what you think of me. All I've wished for years and years is the day that I find a print, or some kind of evidence, and I can take you to see it with your own two eyes, and then I'll know that my life has not been in pursuit of nothing. I want you to feel what I felt, and smell what I smelled. I know that without it, all you'll see is the human pain of it all, but dammit, I have to believe there is something extraordinary out in these woods and that the world is better for it. Without that belief, I don't know that I can keep on going.

I don't need fame or the world to understand, I just need YOU to.

Please.

Please understand, Henry.

And please forgive me.

X

DARLA, COLE HERE'S STILL FRESH IN THE LITTER. WHY DON'T YOU TELL HIM WHAT YOU WERE DOING LAST WEEK.

OH, I GOT AN ANGEL DOWN IN LOUISIANA.

AN ANGEL? IS THAT CODE FOR SOMETHING?

NOPE. I SHOT AN ANGEL DEAD AND THEN BURNED ITS BODY IN A SWAMP.

I'M SORRY, I THINK I NEED TO SHAKE A FEW YEARS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL OUT OF MY HEAD.

I NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT ANGELS WOULD BE IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS A BIGFOOT.

HAHAHA—HE IS FRESH, ISN'T HE?

HAD TO SPANK HIM IN THE HOSPITAL THIS MORNING.

CAN'T LET THE WEIRD STUFF SHAKE YOU, KID.

I'M USUALLY PRETTY GOOD AT NOT GETTING SHAKEN...

BUT ANGELS... THAT FEELS WRONG.

NEXT TO GHOSTS AND ALIENS, THEY'RE PROBABLY THE MOST BELIEVED FICTIONS.

RUBY SAID THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE WEIRD SHIT. SHE WASN'T KIDDING.

SHE'S NOT A BIG KIDDER.

SO THE FIELD OFFICE IS THE CRYPTOZOOLOGY BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

YES AND NO.

HERE'S THE THING YOU GOTTA KNOW ABOUT CRYPTIDS. MOST OF IT IS FUCKING HORSESHIT, AND NOT EVEN OUR BRAND OF HORSESHIT.

WE'RE TALKING GENUINE, OBVIOUS HOAXES DONE BY FOLK LOOKING TO MAKE A BUCK. TRYING TO PUT THEIR TOWN ON THE MAP AND GET A STORY PICKED UP IN THE LOCAL PAPERS.

NOBODY EVER BELIEVED IN A JACKALOPE.

SOME ASSHOLE BROTHERS JUST GLUED ANTLERS ONTO THE HEAD OF A JACKRABBIT, MOUNTED THE FUCKER, AND STARTED SELLING THEM OUT OF THE BED OF THEIR TRUCK BACK IN THE 1930s.

IN OUR LINE OF WORK, YOU NEED TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING TO MAKE IT REAL, AND YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE REAL FUCKING HARD TO MAKE SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T WALK THE EARTH, WALK THE EARTH.

BUT...HERE'S THE FLIP SIDE...FOR ALL OF RECORDED TIME, THERE HAVE BEEN STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE ENCOUNTERING SOME WEIRD FUCKING SHIT.

WE CALL THEM **WILD FICTIONS.**

THE INTERNET'S FUCKED WITH A LOT OF THIS, BY THE WAY. BACK IN THE '90s AND BEFORE, IT WAS PRETTY SIMPLE. THERE WERE THREE MAIN KINDS OF WILD FICTION CLASSIFICATIONS...

CLASS ONE IS THE HAUNTINGS. GHOSTS, POLTERGEISTS, AND DEMONS. THE INTANGIBLES.

CLASS TWO IS CLOSE ENCOUNTERS...YOU KNOW--ALIENS AND UFOS. THAT SORT OF THING. WE ACTUALLY GROUP ANGELS HERE, TOO.

AND FINALLY, WITH CLASS THREE, YOU'VE GOT WHAT MY DAD CALLED CRITTERS. MOSTLY BECAUSE HE DIDN'T LIKE TO USE THE WORD "MONSTERS."

THAT'S THE ORDER OF THREAT, TOO...GHOSTS AND ALL THAT, WE'RE USUALLY TALKING VISUALS ONLY. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS TEND TO FUCK OFF AS QUICK AS THEY CAME.

BUT THE CRITTERS... THEY STICK AROUND, BECAUSE PEOPLE BELIEVE THEM TO BE LIVING, BREATHING CREATURES.

TROUBLE IS... THEY'RE NOT.

THEN WHAT ARE THEY?

REALITY WORKS A LITTLE DIFFERENT AROUND A FICTION. WHEN YOU LOOK AT ONE, YOU'RE LOOKING AT SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T QUITE EXIST...THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T TAKE A CLEAR PICTURE OF THEM.

BEST YOU GET IS A BLUR, AND EVEN THAT IS RARE.

THEY'RE **WEIRD** TO BE AROUND. YOU CAN GET A SUNBURN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT JUST BY STANDING NEAR THEM.

AND TRYING TO MOVE OR THINK? FORGET IT. YOU FEEL NAUSEOUS THE SECOND YOU SET EYES ON ONE. PEOPLE HAVE SEIZURES.

NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT... BUT THEY ARE MEAN FUCKERS. THESE AREN'T ANIMALS— THEY'RE THOUGHT-FORMS...

WALKING NIGHTMARES. WRONG THINGS.

FUNNY PART IS...WHEN THIS ALL GOT STARTED? THE DEPARTMENT DIDN'T KNOW JACK SHIT ABOUT TULPAS. THEY WERE KILLING BIGFOOTS BECAUSE THEY WERE WORRIED THEY'D START A PANIC.

SAME REASON THEY COVERED UP ALL THE EARLY UFO STUFF.

DARLA...YOU WERE SAYING IT USED TO BE CLEANER...BUT NOW IT ISN'T?

THESE DAYS, YOU'VE GOT KIDS WORKING THEMSELVES UP ON IMAGEBOARDS ALL NIGHT, TELLING EACH OTHER SPOOKY SHIT THAT JUST KEEPS ON SPREADING. LIKE CAMPFIRE STORIES READ BY MILLIONS...

ENOUGH TO MANIFEST A FEW OF THEM IN THE REAL WORLD.

YOU SHOULD ASK FRANK BACK IN THE OFFICE HOW **SHE** JOINED. THAT WAS A FUCKING TRIP.

HAWK WAS SAYING NOBODY REALLY BELIEVES IN JACKALOPES, BUT IF SOMEBODY POSTED A JACKALOPE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE AND SOME IDIOT *"INFLUENCER"* TWEETED IT OUT...

I'D BE HUNTING THE LITTLE FUCKS FOR WEEKS.

THE KEY THING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT **ALL** OF THIS, COLE, IS THAT THESE SIDE EFFECTS...THEY'RE BORDERLINE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES.

YOU ENCOUNTER A THING MADE OUT OF PURE BELIEF, YOU KIND OF INTERNALIZE THAT. AND THEN YOU PASS THAT BELIEF ON TO OTHERS...

THAT'S WHY THE WILD ONES ARE SO DANGEROUS. THIS IS THE SORT OF SHIT THAT MAKES MEN BUILD RELIGIONS. IT CREATES A KIND OF ZEALOTRY.

AND YOU SEE THEM OUT HERE, SOMETIMES... THE SASQUATCH HUNTERS THAT DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS THEY'RE HUNTING OR WHY IT DOESN'T ABIDE BY THE RULES OF NATURE...

THE HUNT BECOMES EVERYTHING TO THEM.

DO YOU EVER CROSS PATHS WITH THE HUNTERS? I HAVE TO IMAGINE THEY THINK YOU'RE ONE OF THEM.

YEAH. OF COURSE. I RUN INTO THEM.

BUT IF THEY GET TOO CLOSE—IF THEY'RE AT RISK OF SPREADING THE BELIEF AND MAYBE CREATING MORE WILD FICTIONS RUNNING AROUND THE COUNTRY...

THERE'S REALLY ONLY ONE THING LEFT I **CAN** DO, THEN.

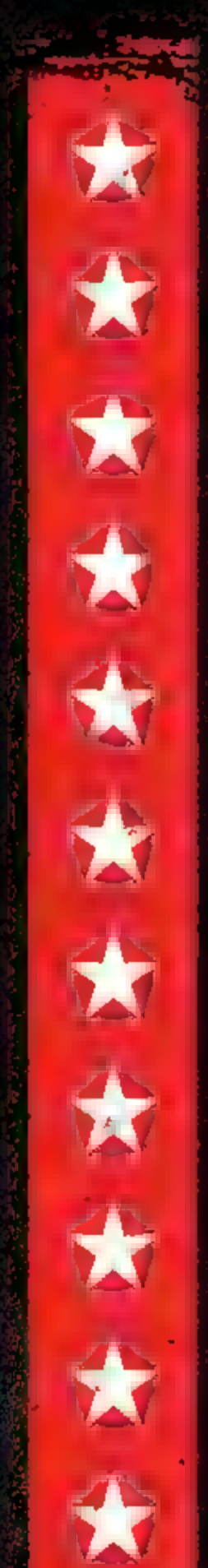
YOU KILL THEM.

YEAH, KID. I KILL THEM.

NOW, WE NEED TO BE QUIETER... WE'RE GETTING CLOSE.

STAY WITH ME.

CHAPTER 8
PART 2



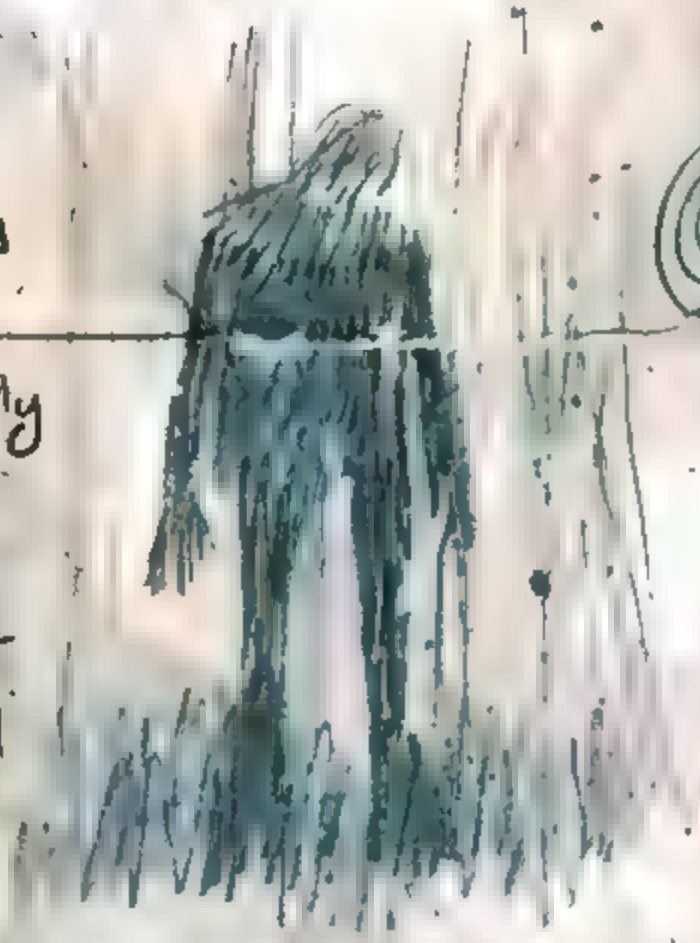
Your mother never REALLY believed, but she liked going out on hiking trips with me when we were young. I think she enjoyed going hunting without ever having to watch some poor deer get shot and cut up. She told me more than once that she'd rather I hunt ... something that didn't exist than something with a beating heart, and I'd always get a bit shy and laugh it off.

She was so beautiful, and never afraid to say what she felt about any damn thing. I would get flustered and angry when she called me out on my nonsense, but I had a way of overthinking everything. Making something straightforward more complicated than it needed to be. And it was like that, early on — I'd be trying to set these elaborate traps, but she'd ask me if I knew how to track a more common animal, and of course I didn't know shit.

So we'd study it together. She'd get me these books and we took classes together, and I learned so many incredible things about these woods and the animals that live inside of them. She thought she was being real subtle, that I didn't notice that she was trying to ground me in the real world with real facts about real animals and things, but I did notice.

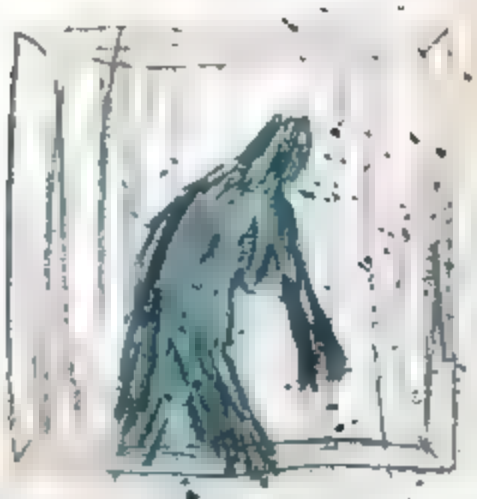
I think she expected my Bigfoot hunting would become more of a side hobby, a little curiosity, and I might actually get good at some skill I learned along the way and that would become my real drive. And hell, I wish that it had worked. I was the wild man she had brought in from the woods and tamed to her ways, and back then she wasn't condescending about all of it.

We'd talk about the wonders and the mysteries of the world late into the evening and I'd tell her about what I remembered from that night in the woods with my father. How it all felt more real and less real.



She'll kill me for telling you this, but one time, she got some psychedelic mushrooms from her sister, and the two of us sat in the forest for a day. And it wasn't exactly the same, but it was the closest to that dreamlike quality I had felt back when, close enough that I sobbed into her chest for an hour, missing my father like I had never missed anything before.

And we had this joke together. I had told her about that rotten stench, the musk of the creature that my father and I had smelled back in the clearing, and well... you know your mother has always been a bit of a farter. So sometimes I would come into the room and give a big comical sniff and say that I think a Sasquatch had been nearby, and feign looking for tracks



That's what it was like for years, and I know her story has changed, but right then it was something special, one of the glues that held the two of us together...

But when you came along, Henry... I think she thought that I was just going to step away from the forests. She got me a still from the Patterson-Gimlin film blown up and put it in a frame for me and told me that it was time for us to get serious. It was time for the hunt to end.

That was around when I knew I was going to break her heart.

Government agents in the woods. Going to kill me. Send help.

NO SIGNAL

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT A CREATURE OF MYTH AND LEGEND.

THE WILD MAN OF THE WOODS, SAID TO WALK THE FORESTS OF DEEPEST, DARKEST AFRICA...

SKINS OF ONE WERE RUMORED TO HANG IN CARTHAGE AFTER THE GREAT HANNO THE NAVIGATOR ENCOUNTERED IT ON HIS JOURNEYS, AND STAYED THERE UNTIL ROME BURNED CARTHAGE TO THE GROUND.

FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS, WESTERN CIVILIZATION THOUGHT THIS WILD MAN BELONGED IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS UNICORNS OR DRAGONS... TALL TALES FROM THE UNTAMED CORNERS OF THE WORLD.

UNTIL THOMAS SAVAGE DISCOVERED A PRIMATE SKULL IN 1847 THAT DIDN'T MATCH ANY MAN OR MONKEY PREVIOUSLY DOCUMENTED.

AND IT WAS STILL ANOTHER FIFTY YEARS AFTER THAT BEFORE IT WAS SPOTTED BY SOMEONE NOT NATIVE TO AFRICA.

THAT'S THE STORY OF THE **GORILLA.** AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO PLACE IT IN THE RIGHT TIME AND THE RIGHT CONTEXT...

THIS WAS THE PEAK OF WESTERN IMPERIALISM. THE WORLD WAS SHRINKING, TRADE ROUTES WERE GROWING, INFORMATION WAS SPREADING, AND PEOPLE WERE LEARNING MORE AND MORE ABOUT CREATURES AND CULTURES THEY HAD NEVER **IMAGINED** BEFORE.

CIRCUSES WERE TRAVELING EUROPE AND AMERICA, GIVING PEOPLE THEIR FIRST EVER CHANCES TO SEE A LION OR AN ELEPHANT OR A GIRAFFE...

CHARLES DARWIN WENT TO THE GALAPAGOS AND DESCRIBED SOME BIG FUCKING TURTLES AND A BUNCH OF ANIMALS THAT DON'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.

WESTERN SCIENCE FOLLOWS IMPERIALISM INTO THE WILD, AND THE PUBLIC IMAGINATION SWELLS AT THE THOUGHT OF IT.

AND THE QUESTION IS...WHAT INCREDIBLE CREATURES COULD LIVE IN ALL OF THE DEEP, DARK, HIDDEN PLACES OF THE WORLD?

YOU START GETTING STORIES OF "ADVENTURERS" WHO GO TO THE HARD-TO-REACH CORNERS OF THE WORLD. MOST OF THEM RICH FOLKS, OR RICH-ADJACENT.

THEY ALL WANT TO BE THE FIRST PERSON TO WALK IN PLACES NO MAN HAD EVER WALKED BEFORE.

THOUGH AS I THINK YOU CAN IMAGINE, THOSE PLACES HAD ALL BEEN WELL VISITED OVER THE CENTURIES, JUST NOT BY WHITE PEOPLE.

YOU'RE LOSING THE THREAD, HAWK.

RIGHT.

BUT HE'S RIGHT, COLE. YOU SHOULD KEEP ALL THAT CONTEXT IN MIND.

IT WAS A NEW AGE OF EXPLORATION, AND THOSE EXPLORERS, THEIR EXPLOITS GOT TOLD IN EVERY NEWSPAPER IN THE WESTERN WORLD.

WHICH INSPIRED MORE PEOPLE TO GO OUT AND EXPLORE THE WORLD AND FIND HIDDEN THINGS. ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT FINDING HIDDEN THINGS IS TOUGH.

BUT YOU CAN STILL GET NEWS FROM FAKING THE FINDING OF HIDDEN THINGS, RIGHT IN YOUR HOMETOWN.

IN 1934, A SURGEON TOOK A PICTURE OF A LOG IN A LAKE IN SCOTLAND, AND IT MADE NEWS ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER.

BEFORE THEN, IT WAS JUST A LOCAL LEGEND. LIKE THE MONSTER THAT LIVES IN YOUR SUMMER CAMP'S LAKE. A FUN GAME.

BUT NEWSMEN LIKE SELLING NEWSPAPERS, SO IT SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE IN THE IMAGINATION OF CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD.

GOT THEM HUNGRY FOR THE IDEA THAT THERE MIGHT BE MONSTERS IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD.

AND NOT JUST BACKYARDS. LAKES. AND JUNGLES. APPROACHING THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, WE'VE GOT FOLKS TRYING AFTER THE GREATEST FEAT IN ADVENTURING.

REACHING THE PEAK OF MOUNT EVEREST.

EVEREST HAD ITS OWN LEGEND, A CREATURE OF LOCAL FOLKLORE. ITS OWN WILDMAN. THE NEPALESE SHERPAS CALLED HIM THE ***YETI***.

BUT HE MADE A SPLASH IN THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS AS THE ***ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN***. THAT NAME GOT COINED IN THE '20S. BUT FOLKS DIDN'T GET SERIOUSLY CLOSE UNTIL THE '50S.

ON ONE SUCH CLIMB IN '51, A DR. WARD TOOK PICTURES OF YETI FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW, AND THEY SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD.

AND EVERYONE CLIMBING THOSE MOUNTAINS GOT ASKED ABOUT THE YETI...AND ABOUT FOOTPRINTS.

BY THE END OF THE DECADE, A MAN NAMED JERRY CREW, A LOGGER IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, CONTACTED A LOCAL REPORTER ABOUT STRANGE, LARGE FOOTPRINTS AROUND HIS WORKSITE.

THERE WERE STORIES WHISPERED IN THE LOGGING CAMP ABOUT MASSIVE OIL DRUMS, TOO BIG FOR ANY ONE MAN TO MOVE, SHIFTING AROUND IN THE NIGHT.

AND SO THE LEGEND OF BIGFOOT BEGAN, AND TORE THROUGH THE AMERICAN PRESS. THE IDEA OF A YETI IN OUR OWN BACKYARD.

NOW, THIS GETS WORSE A DECADE AFTER THAT WHEN THE PATTERSON-GIMLIN FILM SHOWED A BLURRY BIGFOOT WALKING ALONGSIDE BLUFF CREEK IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA.

BUT IT'S THE PRESS THAT GOT THE STORY IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

OF COURSE, THE FAMILY OF ONE OF CREW'S CO-WORKERS ADMITTED THE WHOLE THING WAS A HOAX A GOOD FIFTY YEARS LATER. THE FOOTPRINTS WERE MADE WITH BIG WOOD-CARVED FEET.

BUT THE BELIEF STUCK AROUND, TOOK A LIFE OF ITS OWN, AND THEN STARTED WALKING THE BACKWOODS OF AMERICA.

THERE IS SOME DATA OUT THERE THAT COULD POINT TO AN UNDISCOVERED OFFSHOOT OF HUMANITY THAT LINGERED LONG ENOUGH IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS TO BECOME THE LEGENDS OF THE YETI...

AND THERE'S NATIVE AMERICAN LORE THAT GOT WRAPPED UP IN THE BIGFOOT CRAZE, WHICH IS WHERE THE NAME SASQUATCH COMES FROM...

BUT THE WILD FICTION COMES FROM THE LIES. AND WHEN THE LIES WALK THE WOODS, WE'RE ALL IN TROUBLE.

SEE, THE STORIES THAT **DON'T** GET OUT, THE ONES THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH KEEPS SECRET, ARE THE WEIRD ONES. THE DANGEROUS ONES.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SOME WILD TULPA BIGFOOTS RIPPING A FAMILY OF CAMPERS APART. THAT SORT OF THING. BLOODSHED AND HORROR.

MONSTER STUFF.

IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE **WANT**, IT'S ABOUT WHAT'S NECESSARY. THE MORE STORIES GET OUT THERE, THE MORE DANGEROUS THESE THINGS GET. THE MORE THEY KILL.

AND YOU'RE WILLING TO KILL THE PEOPLE THEY **DON'T**? JUST FOR STUMBLING INTO THE MESS?

I'VE GOT SOME FOLKS IN HOLLYWOOD, AND WE MAKE SURE THAT WHEN BIGFOOT SHOWS UP IN MOVIES, IT'S USUALLY SOME KIND OF GAG, A PLAY OFF THE MORE OBVIOUS HOAXES.

WE DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO KEEP AS FEW OF THESE THINGS IN THE WILD AS WE CAN.

YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THE BIG PICTURE, KIDDO. THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE FOR MORALS, BUT YOU HAVE TO PUT THE WELL-BEING OF THE COUNTRY FIRST.

THAT'S THE ETHOS OF WHAT WE DO IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

ENOUGH WITH THE HISTORY LESSON...WE'RE IN ITS TERRITORY NOW. I CAN SMELL IT OUT THERE.

GET QUIET, GET DOWN, AND DON'T SAY ANOTHER FUCKING WORD.

I did work to put it behind me for a little while, but then there was a time we were over at your Uncle Bobby's for a barbecue. I think you must have been around two years old. Your cousins and your brother weren't born yet. We lived close, but I hadn't really spoken to Bobby since our mother passed from breast cancer. We tried to come out to his weekly summer barbecues a few times a year, making the long drive out to Portland, mostly out of guilt that he never got to see you.

But even at these things, I would stand to the side, making small talk when I had to and otherwise waiting for the whole thing to end. This time, Bobby had been drinking, and I could hear him laughing from the other side of the yard, and then I heard the word "Sasquatch" and started to move closer. He was talking about how his pathetic drunk of a father tricked himself into thinking he saw a Bigfoot and drove himself crazy trying to hunt it down.

I remember him saying, "Imagine being so sad that Bigfoot wouldn't real that you fucking shot yourself in the head," and that was all I let him get out. I broke his jaw, and three of my fingers with it.

And I know now that that was Bobby working through his own pain and anger, and I know I didn't help anything by throwing punches (forgive me for being the dad, but I can't think of a moment in my life a thrown punch has done anything but make things worse, and you should remember that), but I was seeing red, shouting that I was there that night. That I had smelled the Bigfoot, that I had seen its prints, and that it was our mom and him who had pushed our dad to kill himself, not the thing he'd seen out there.

Your mother had to pull me away, and I remember the frightened look in her eyes, and I remember you crying. That was the moment that my fascination became something dangerous to her, and something kicked in to protect you and get us all out of that situation.

I was angry the whole ride back, shouting about how some people just didn't want there to be anything extraordinary in the whole world because they were too boring to appreciate it, and they want to take the joy of the extraordinary away from the people who can see it.

She agreed with me in the moment, but from a distance. Like the wheels in her brain were turning full speed, reappraising all of our time out in the woods, our whole young lives together, and suddenly seeing me like my mother saw my father.

You must be too young to remember all that yourself, but I guess they say that kids take moments like that and internalize them for life. So maybe that was the moment you started to be afraid of me, too.

After I had my hand fixed and got the doctor back home, I noticed she had taken the Bigfoot photo off the wall. She sat me down that night, tears in her eyes, and told me that she didn't want this to become the wedge between us that it had been between my parents, but that I could never talk that way in front of you again, and that it might be best if I kept my hobby to myself and to a minimum. That became her euphemism—"my hobby."

That year for Christmas, she got me my own computer to put in the garage with all my hunting gear, and she told me that maybe I could find other people who liked my hobby on the internet. I know the way she tells that story now, but I do swear to you that she was the one who told me to find friends on the computer to talk about all of this stuff with so I didn't have to burden her, or frighten all of you.

And I found all sorts of friends. It took a while to find the right sort of community. There are all sorts of beliefs out there, and some of them are a bit nutty even to me. There's a whole set who believe that Bigfoots are time travelers, and my friends and I joke about them the way the rest of you joke about us.

But I just remember that rush of relief when I finally wrote down the story of that had happened with me and my father when I was a boy, and I wasn't laughed out of the room.

These men believed my stories, and they had stories of their own. More than that, they valued all of the things I had learned with your mother in our younger lives together, hiking the parks and forests of the Pacific Northwest.

I told them what we should be looking for, and they helped point me in the direction of where I should be looking. A few times, I saw a photo of a footprint, and I would race into the house and tell your mother to come out with me and look at it. And she would, calmly, humoring me the best she was able. She'd just sort of glance at the photos and nod at them and then head back inside to help take care of you and your younger brother.

I started planning trips with the men on the boards, where we could meet up and hunt together, and I won't lie, those trips were the best time of my whole life. I could still pretend that I had a loving wife and children back home, and I could tell the nice lady at the diner about how much you were growing and how I would bring you out when you were old enough. And then I'd meet with these men and we'd set up camp and just talk for hours about the hidden wonders of the world.

I wish those days could have lasted forever. But you know how it all went sour. I don't have to recount all of that. I'm still sorrier than I'll ever be able to say to you how out of sorts I got when she didn't let me take you. I'm sorry for what I said to her. I'm sorry I hurt you when you started crying.

There is nothing in my life I have felt more shame over than that night. I was so sure I was on the right track, and I wanted to bring you like my father had brought me.

I wanted to show you how big and strange and wonderful the universe is, and teach you to think outside what your teachers and the government want you to believe.

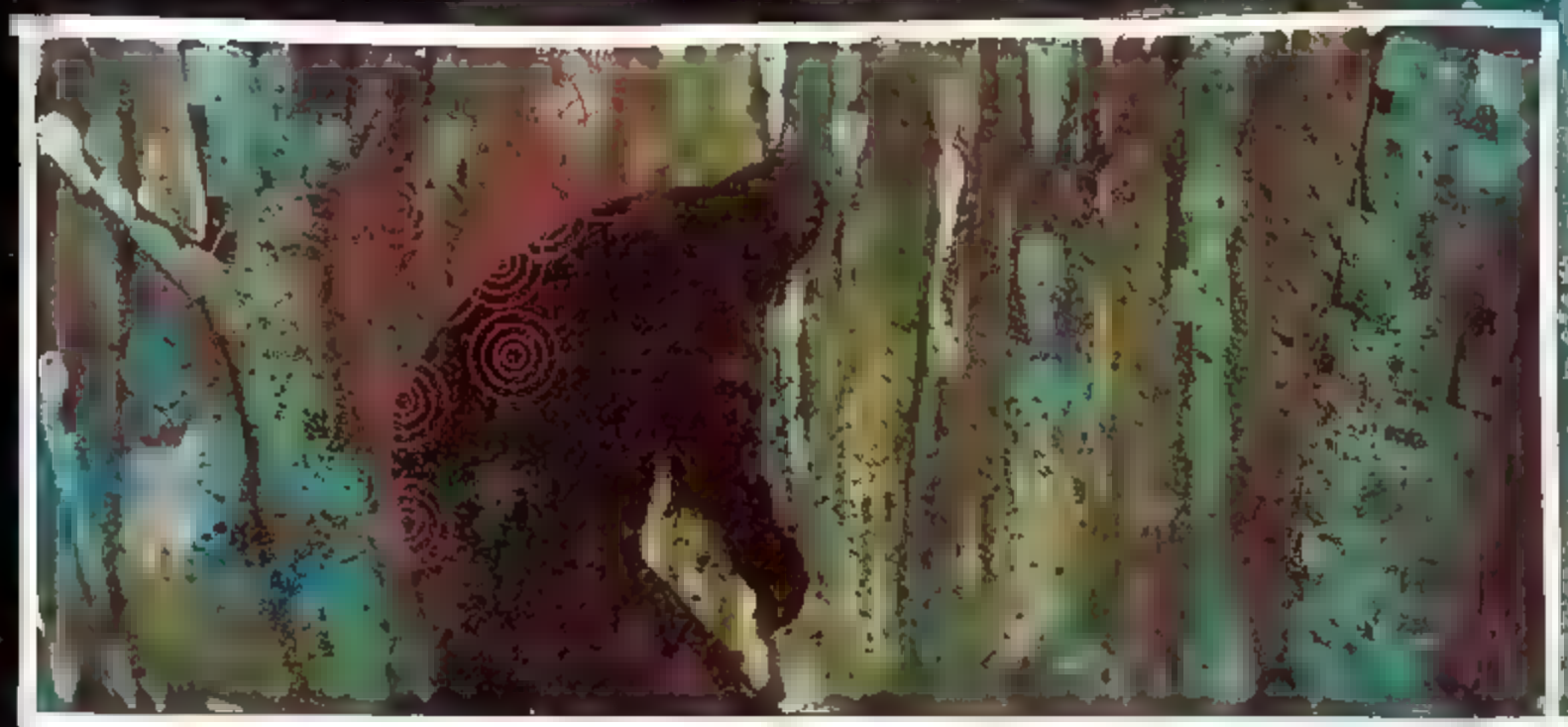
But instead I acted like the madman everyone always thought I must be, and I turned you against my hunt for the rest of your life.

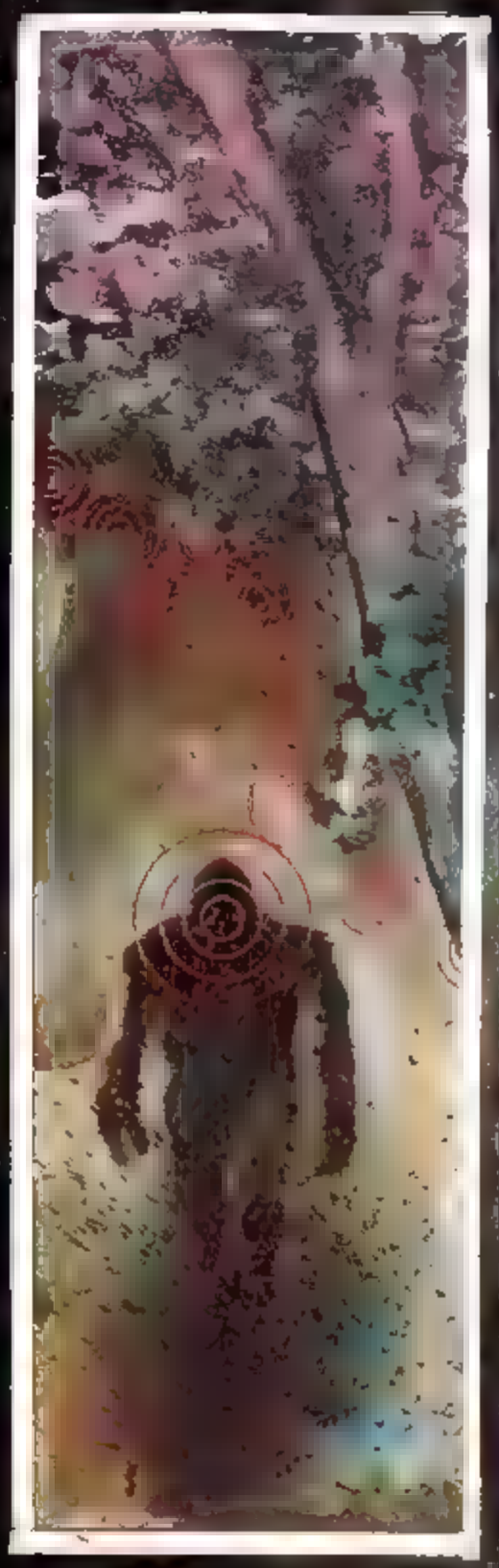
~~I don't blame your mother for leaving me, or for taking you away...~~
I think maybe that was for the best. I was starting to resent how she kept me from doing the research I cared about, and she resented me for every minute I spent on the computer and not with you and your brother.

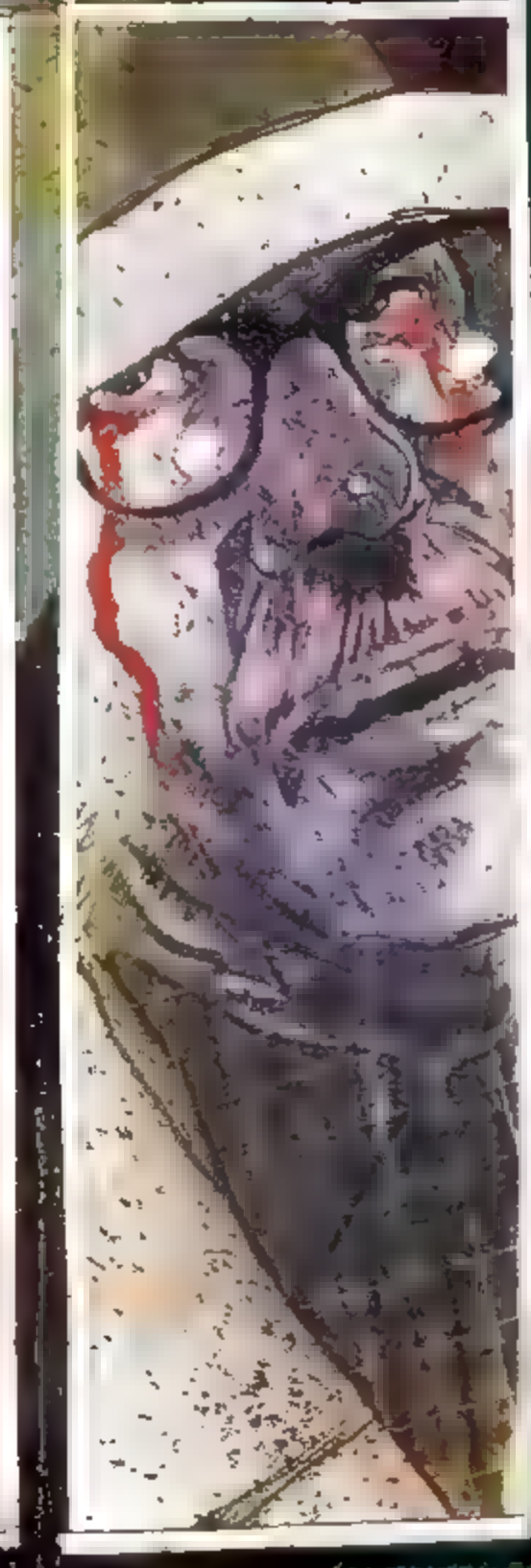
And I guess I know she's right on some level. That she was making the rational choice to protect you all. I agreed to see a psychologist in order to keep seeing you boys as you entered your teenage years, and I know you thought that helped me for a time. But all it did was sharpen into focus how little our society values the bits of magic and wonder that exist all around us. I had to pretend that things I believed with all my heart were little fictions in order to be allowed to take you boys out to a movie. And I just wanted to scream, seeing you boys growing up in a world where the fantastic could only exist on a screen, in a made-up story told to you by a corporation desperate for every penny you'd ever earn, when I knew there were incredible things out in those woods, and if I could show you them, it would change your entire life.

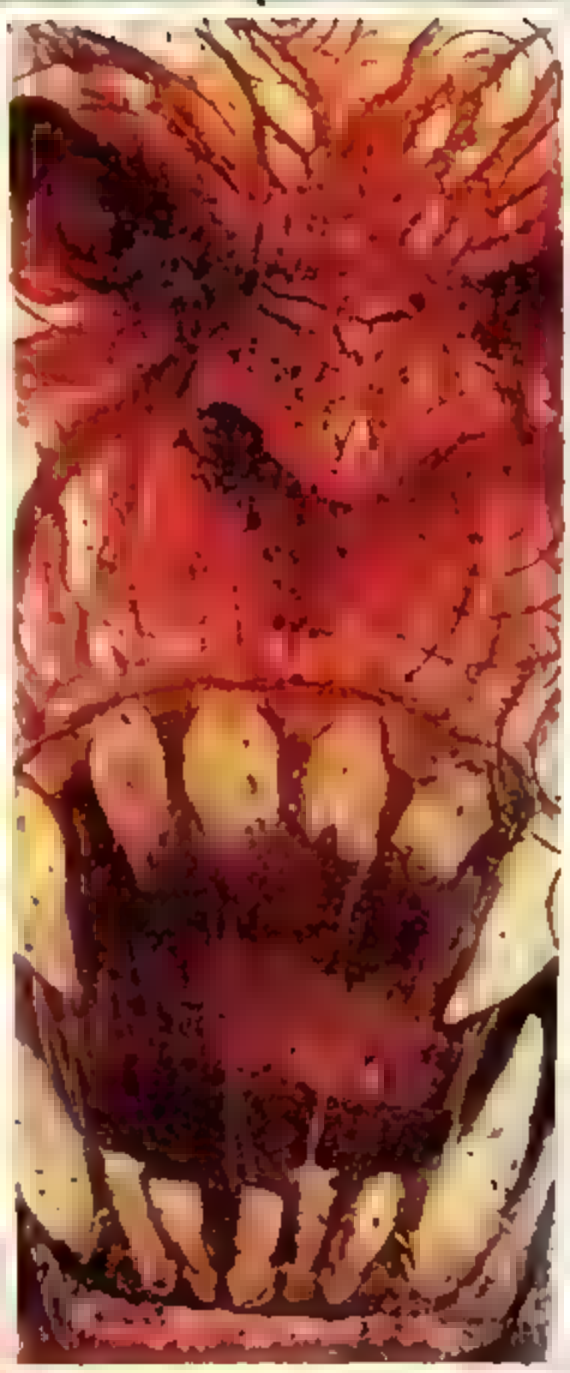
I tried so hard to keep it all bottled up, but I couldn't do it. I didn't know how to live in that world knowing everything I knew, and maybe that does make me crazy. I knew that I had only seen its print, that I had only smelled its musk... but if I could see it with my own two eyes and show it to you and prove to you that I'm not an unreasonable man, then somehow all of this would have been worth it. My father's life and mine.

I don't know that there's anything I wouldn't do to show you both.









HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING?

F-FIFTY YEARS.

THAT'S A LONG TIME, FRIEND. THAT'S A LONG, LONG TIME.

NO ONE IS GOING TO BELIEVE THIS. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT? BUT YOU'LL KNOW, RIGHT IN HERE, THAT YOU FOUND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR.

YOU DON'T NEED ANYBODY ELSE TO BELIEVE, BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE.

I DON'T... I DON'T KNOW...

YOUR HUNT'S OVER, SON. IT'S OKAY.

YOU CAN STOP NOW. YOU CAN GO LIVE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. IT'S OKAY.

IT'S OKAY.

HAWK?

LET HIM GO. HE'S DONE.

LEE WON'T LIKE THAT.

THEN WE DON'T FUCKING **TELL** LEE, ALRIGHT?

YEAH.

THERE'S A TIME AND PLACE FOR MORALS, *HUH?*

YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT, KID?

NO. NO, I DON'T.

GOOD. NOW GRAB A SAW. WE HAVE TO CHOP THIS FUCKER UP SO WE CAN TAKE IT SOMEWHERE AND BURN IT.

YEAH. OKAY.

I'm ~~do~~ so tired, Henry.

I'm older than my father ever was. And you're a fine young man, supporting yourself, living a good and normal life. I wish you would let me meet your fiancée, and I wish your mother would return my phone calls.

I had a beer with your brother the other week and it was nice and I didn't even bring up "my hobby" until he did. I wish he wasn't such a stranger to me, but I can see so much of you in him, and I know that you were there for him when I wasn't and I will always be grateful for that.

But I am writing this all to tell you that I think this is my last hunt. I've thought I've gotten close before, but I really do think that this time, I've done my homework and I've identified its feeding grounds. I'm going to go out there for as long as it takes to know one way or the other. And if I find something real, something I can hold in my hands, I am going to take it home to you and show it to you.

But I've gotten close enough before to know how unlikely that is. And if it doesn't go my way, I'm writing all of this as a bit of my final goodbye:

I don't know how to live in a world that won't allow room for fantastic things in the shadows, and I don't have it in me to start from scratch again. I wish I had some great fortune to leave behind to you, but I guess what I wanted you to have more than anything was my last testament.

My final word on the matter.

The pursuit of the impossible gave me life, and the pursuit of the mundane robbed it from me.

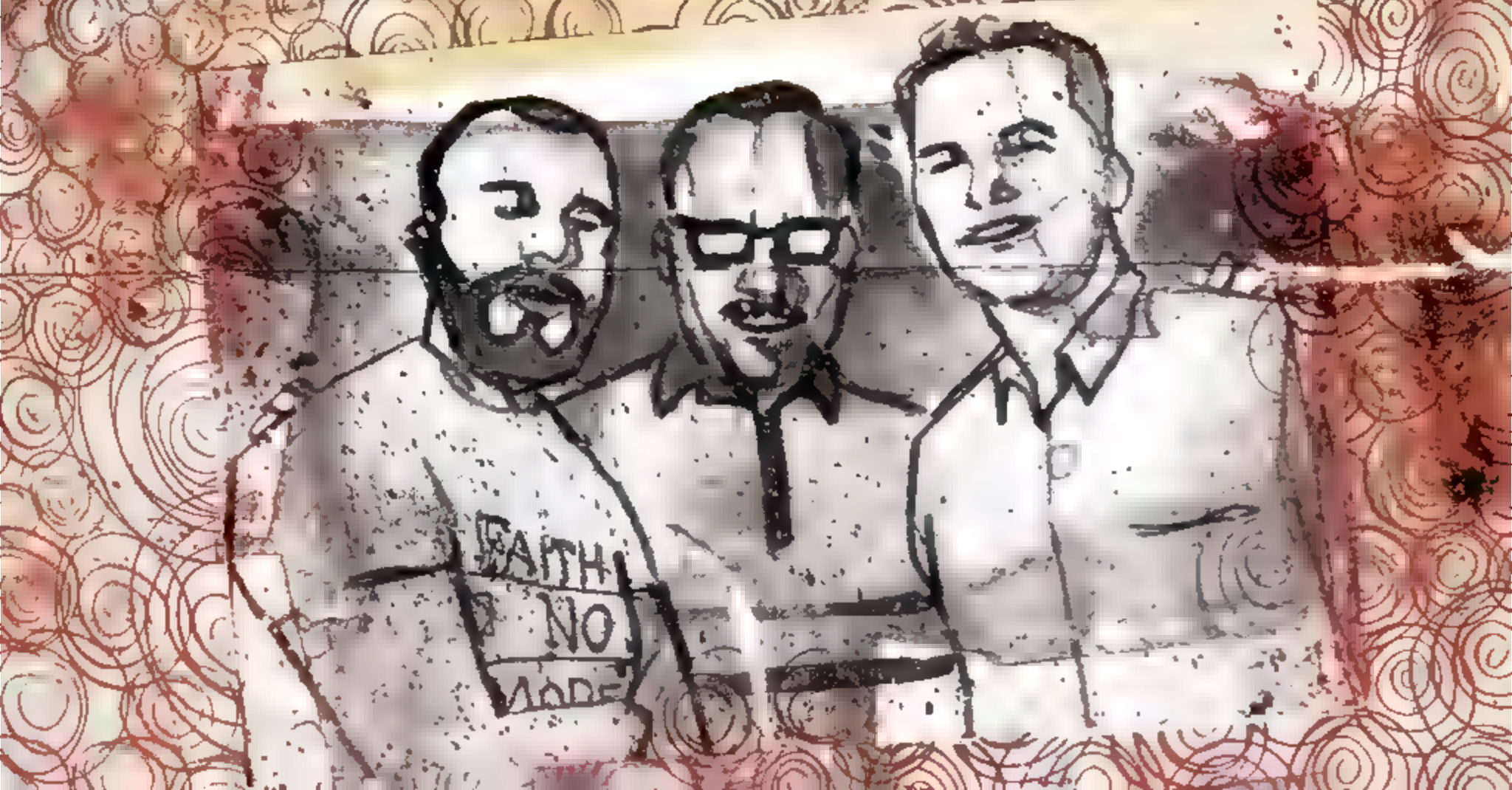
I hope you find something to hunt that gives you meaning, that is more within your grasp. I hope you love me, through all your frustration and resentment, and I hope you can hear what I am saying, without throwing it all away as madness.

I wish I had a better way with words in person or on the phone, but this will have to do. If you receive this in the mail, they've probably already found my body and informed you, so it shouldn't be a surprise... But I hope that this is a better world than that.

I hope this is the world where I find something out in these woods and bring it home to you, and you can see the truth in what I have spent my life doing, and we can laugh at all my little melodrama.

But in either world, know that I love you, that I love your brother, and that I love your mother, with all of my heart.

And more than that, know that I am very sorry that I was never able to show you something impossible.



CHAPTER 9

MILWAUKEE, WI.
1987.

NOW, **WHO** DO YOU REPRESENT AGAIN?

MRS. TURNER, I'VE ALREADY SAID. I'M HERE TO REPRESENT **YOU.** TO GET YOUR BOY'S STORY OUT SO WHAT HAPPENED HERE DOESN'T HAPPEN ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

DID HE DRAW THIS?

YES. IT'S UPSETTING, ISN'T IT?

YEAH, IT'S TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE STUFF.

THE IDEA THAT THIS SORT OF MAN MIGHT BE OUT THERE WITH THE OTHER SATANISTS...IT GIVES ME THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES, I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU.

WHEN THE CULTS STARTED DYING OUT, ALL THESE AIMLESS YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WERE EASY PREY TO SEDUCE INTO THE NEXT STEP DOWN THIS DARK ROAD. IT'S THE SAME AS DRUGS.

IN THE WORDS OF NANCY REAGAN, JUST SAY NO. ALL THESE UNNATURAL IDEAS, THE MUSIC, THE DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS...IT ALL POINTS TO SATAN.

WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PRESCHOOL TEACHERS THEY'VE PERVERTED WITH ALL THEIR UNGODLY WAYS? THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE TO STOP.

I JUST... I DON'T KNOW.

I HEARD YOU USED TO DO A LITTLE BIT OF WRITING.

YES, A LITTLE. FOR THE *SENTINEL* WHEN I WAS JUST OUT OF SCHOOL. THAT'S WHERE I MET COLE'S FATHER.

NOW, HAVE YOU GOTTEN ANY CALLS FROM THE BIG PUBLISHERS OUT EAST YET?

THE *NATIONAL ENQUIRER* CALLED, BUT THAT ALL SEEMS SO SALACIOUS TO ME...

I MEAN THE **LEGITIMATE** BIG PUBLISHERS. THE BOOK PUBLISHERS... I HAVE SOME FRIENDS IN THOSE SPACES, AND I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF TELLING A FEW OF THEM THAT YOU'RE A WRITER.

AND I DON'T MEAN TO BE CRASS, MA'AM. BUT I THINK I COULD SEE THE LITTLE DOLLAR SIGNS RING UP IN THEIR EYES.

YOU THINK THAT *MICHELLE REMEMBERS* BOOK WAS A HIT? JUST WAIT UNTIL THEY GET THE STORY STRAIGHT FROM A BOY'S MOTHER. AND NOT YEARS LATER, BUT MONTHS AFTER IT ALL HAPPENED.

MIGHT BE ENOUGH TO MOVE UP TO RIVER HILLS. BUY YOURSELF ONE OF THOSE BIG, NICE HOUSES WITH BIG, STURDY WALLS AROUND IT.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. ARE YOU AN **AGENT**? ARE YOU TRYING TO GET A CUT?

NO, MA'AM. I'M JUST AN UPSTANDING AMERICAN, AND I CAN'T TOLERATE THE IDEA OF WHAT THESE SATANISTS ARE DOING TO OUR CHILDREN.

I NEED TO TALK TO MY HUSBAND.

OF COURSE. YOU JUST TAKE THIS NUMBER. IT'S AN EDITOR AT RANDOM HOUSE. THEY'RE EXPECTING YOUR CALL.

AND THIS HERE IS THE NUMBER OF MY FRIEND AT *NBC NIGHTLY NEWS*. THEY'RE DYING TO BRING COLE'S STORY TO THE COUNTRY. I THINK THEY'D FLY THE WHOLE FAMILY OUT TO NEW YORK.

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE TO GET AWAY FROM THIS HOOPLA FOR A SECOND? ALL EXPENSES PAID, OF COURSE.

WHO DO I SAY TOLD ME TO CALL THEM?

"OUR MUTUAL FRIEND."

BRRING BRRING

SORRY... I SHOULD TAKE THAT. I'M EXPECTING A CALL FROM COLE'S FATHER.

YOU GO RIGHT AHEAD.

YOU'RE A LIAR.

OH?

ALL GROWN-UPS ARE LIARS.

BUT ONLY SOME OF THEM **KNOW** THAT THEY'RE LIARS. IT'S BETTER TO BE ONE OF THE ONES WHO KNOW RATHER THAN ONE OF THE ONES WHO DON'T.

YEAH.

WHY?

I'LL TELL YOU WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.

NOW, GO WATCH YOUR CARTOONS.

YOU'RE RIGHT. BUT I'LL TELL YOU A LITTLE SECRET.

YEAH?

Chapter Nine!
REVELATIONS

Somewhere in America. Now.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE TOOK YOU TO OREGON.

I CAN'T BELIEVE MY SHOES STILL SMELL LIKE BIGFOOT. I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO THROW THEM OUT.

BURN THEM. MONSTER STENCH DOESN'T WASH OUT, BUT IT CATCHES PEOPLE'S ATTENTION.

MAYBE I SHOULD THROW MYSELF IN THE FIRE WHILE I'M AT IT. I'M WORRIED IT'S IN MY HAIR AND SKIN.

GET SOME BAKING SODA AND DISH SOAP. LIKE YOU'D GET THE SKUNK SMELL OUT OF A DOG.

HAH.

I'M NOT JOKING.

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT JOKING. THAT'S WHY I'M LAUGHING. I'M TRAPPED IN A SHITTY AIRPORT HOTEL TRYING TO WASH OFF BIGFOOT STINK WHILE I WAIT FOR THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER TO DISAPPEAR.

AND WHILE I WAIT, A CRAZY OLD MAN KEEPS TRYING TO TEACH ME ABOUT MAGIC AND MONSTERS.

YOU SHOULD BE COMING HOME SOON. I SAW A REPORT FROM HAWK ON MY DESK THIS MORNING.

GOOD. MATTY IS CLEARLY UPSET WITH ME. I NEED A BETTER COVER FOR WEIRD, INDEFINITE TRIPS LIKE THIS. HE'S NOT USED TO IT...

YOU NEED TO GET BETTER AT LYING.

YEAH. MAYBE I'LL ASK HAWK FOR POINTERS.

HOW HAS HE BEEN?

HORRIBLE. A LITTLE CHARMING, TOO. HE'S FUNNY.

YEAH.

BUT HE'S STILL HORRIBLE.

YEAH. HE IS.

LOOK, COLE... WHEN MARTIN BARKER TOLD YOU THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH WEREN'T ANGELS...HAWK IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF AGENT HE HAD IN MIND.

HE HELPED THE DEPARTMENT FIGURE OUT HOW TO TAKE THE ABSTRACT FEAR OF THE GOVERNMENT PEOPLE HAD IN THE '80S AND '90S AND TURN IT INTO REAL POWER.

HE IS CHARMING. HE CAN NEEDLE HIS WAY UNDER YOUR SKIN. YOU START TO LIKE HIM. TRUST HIM, EVEN...BUT DON'T LET HIM CLOSE, COLE. HE'LL HURT YOU.

I'M NOT GOING TO LET HIM CLOSE.

GOOD.

HE TOLD ME... HE TOLD ME THAT YOU'VE SEEN THE LADY IN RED, TOO.

YEAH.

CAN I ASK...?

NO.

I NEED TO GO.

Beneath the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

IT WAS ANOTHER DEAD END.

I THINK HE'S PLAYING WITH US. TRYING TO SHOW OFF THAT BLACK HAT CAN DO THINGS WE DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WHAT DO WE HAVE SO FAR?

MARTIN BARKER WAS BORN A LITTLE WAY OUTSIDE OF DALLAS IN 1965. NO SURVIVING FAMILY.

ON HIS BIRTH CERTIFICATE FILED WITH THE STATE, IT SAYS THAT HIS FATHER IS SATAN AND HIS MOTHER IS THE WHORE OF BABYLON.

AFTER THAT, I KIND OF FIGURED THAT HUNTING DOWN ANYTHING ABOUT HIM IN HARD COPY WAS A FOOL'S ERRAND. IT'S LIKELY THAT BARKER ISN'T EVEN HIS REAL NAME.

MAYBE HE'S A PAPERBACK HORROR FAN.

OR A FAN OF CHOPPING DOGS' NUTS OFF.

OR THAT.

I DID CONFIRM THAT THE BOULET FAMILY WAS UNDERWRITING THE ENTIRE BLACK HAT ORGANIZATION, AS MUCH AS IT EXISTS ON PAPER.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT STARTED AS A GOOGLE RIVAL AROUND THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM, FOCUSED ON BUILDING THE KINDS OF ALGORITHMS THAT UNDERLIE PRETTY MUCH ALL SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY TODAY...

WHICH LINES UP WITH WHAT FRANK HAS PUT TOGETHER FROM THE COMPUTERS WE TOOK FROM DENVER...

OKAY, YEAH. SO...

I'M GOING TO DUMB THIS ALL DOWN FOR YOU, BECAUSE IT'S ACTUALLY MUCH MORE COMPLICATED THAN I'M MAKING IT SOUND.

BUT BASICALLY, IT LOOKS LIKE BLACK HAT WAS ABLE TO CREATE A KIND OF DECENTRALIZED INFLUENCE ENGINE THAT ERASES ANY TRACE OF ITSELF.

FIRST, IT SCRAPES DATA FROM SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO FIND ALL THE PEOPLE MOST INCLINED TO BELIEVE WHATEVER HORRIBLE THING THEY WANT THEM TO BELIEVE.

THEN THEY START BOOSTING THE SPECIFIC NARRATIVE THEY'RE LOOKING TO BRING TO THE SURFACE. LIKE...

I FOUND A SERIES OF TWEETS, VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF *"THE DEEP STATE IS BREEDING REPTILIANS IN DENVER."*

THEY GET THOSE POSTS UP AND ROLLING IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT BELIEVE IN REPTILIANS. THAT'S WHERE THEY GIVE THE MOST DETAIL, THE BREEDING TUBES AND ALL OF THAT.

AND THEN THEY START GETTING A LITTLE MORE GENERAL, TARGETING THE BROADLY CONSPIRACY-INCLINED.

DROP OUT THE REPTILIAN ELEMENT FOR THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD THINK THAT'S NUTS. STICK TO THE IDEA OF DEEP STATE BREEDING CAMPS IN BLACK SITES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

AND THEN, FOR THE FOLKS WHO WOULD BALK AT THE IDEA OF BREEDING CAMPS, THEY SIMPLIFY IT DOWN TO THE IDEA OF SECRET GOVERNMENTS AND BLACK SITES...

SUDDENLY, IN A MATTER OF WEEKS, YOU HAVE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN THESE HIDDEN BASES, AND YOU'VE DUG A RABBIT HOLE LEADING TO THE IDEA OF *"REPTILIAN BREEDING TUBES."*

THEY ERASE THEIR ORIGINAL POSTS, AND LET THE ECHOES OF THEM JUST KEEP ON SPREADING ACROSS THE INTERNET. THAT'S THE CRAZY THING.

AFTER THEY GET WHAT THEY WANT, THEY DON'T SHUT IT DOWN. THEY LET IT KEEP GROWING OUT THERE.

OKAY. THAT ALL SOUNDS BAD.

BLACK HAT CAN DO IN A FEW DAYS WHAT WE CAN DO IN A FEW MONTHS.

THEY DO IT BY INFLUENCING A DECENTRALIZED FRINGE THAT'S BIG ENOUGH TO HIT THE TIPPING POINT AND ALTER REALITY WITHOUT THE MAINSTREAM EVEN REALIZING IT'S HAPPENING.

THIS IS HOW THEY KEEP MANIFESTING *"EVIDENCE"* OF THEIR CONSPIRACY THEORIES. AND WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO FIGHT BACK.

I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE '80S AND SET ALL OF THOSE FUCKING NERDS ON FIRE. SMASH THEIR FUCKING COMPUTERS WITH BASEBALL BATS.

YES SIR.

WE NEED TO START REVERSE ENGINEERING WHAT THEY CAN DO, SO WE CAN DO IT BETTER.

FRANK IS FIGURING OUT A PLAN TO DO ALL OF THAT, BUT SHE'S GOING TO NEED MORE RESOURCES.

TELL HER TO USE THE MAGIC FUCKING COMPUTERS TO MAKE PEOPLE BELIEVE SHE HAS MORE RESOURCES.

SIR, THIS IS ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE.

YOU THINK I DON'T FUCKING **KNOW THAT,** RUBY?!

GET OUT OF HERE. I NEED TO THINK.

THERE'S ONE MORE THING.

WHAT?

I WANT TO TAKE COLE OUT OF THE DOGHOUSE. THE ONLY THING WE KNOW FOR SURE ABOUT BARKER IS THAT HE HAS HIS EYES ON COLE. I THINK WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE HIM.

YOU WANT TO TRICK HIM INTO BEING OUR BAIT.

I THINK HE'LL DO IT WILLINGLY.

FINE. GIVE ME A PLAN.

SIR...CAN I ASK WHY YOU SENT HIM OUT TO HAWK?

WANTED HAWK'S TAKE ON THE KID. THAT'S WHY I SIGNED OFF ON IT.

SIGNED OFF?

YOU THOUGHT IT WAS MY IDEA TO SEND THE KID OUT THERE?

HAWK **REQUESTED** HIM. HE'S BEEN WANTING A FACE-TO-FACE SINCE WE BROUGHT COLE IN.

NOW GET OUT OF HERE. I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.

Colorado.

HEY, KID. PACK UP YOUR STUFF AND GET OUTSIDE. THERE'LL BE A CAR WAITING TO TAKE YOU TO THE AIRPORT.

ALL MY STUFF? AM I HEADING HOME?

YEAH. THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE YOU'RE HEADED. BUT THERE MIGHT BE A FEW DETOURS ALONG THE WAY.

AND YOU'RE SURE WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE?

YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET THERE?

I'VE BEEN WAITING TO FINISH THIS FOR ABOUT THIRTY YEARS...

AS LONG AS YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE DOING THIS JOB FOR NOW.

YEAH, YOU FAT FUCK.

I KNOW EXACTLY WHO I WORK FOR.

I THOUGHT WE'D BE GOING TO CHECK OUT THE BASE.

WHAT BASE?

SO, IT'S GONE.

YEAH, KING COLE. IT WAS ALL JUST A BAD DREAM. YOU CAN PUT IT OUT OF YOUR MIND. THERE NEVER WAS A SECRET WORLD HEADQUARTERS UNDER THE DENVER AIRPORT.

THAT'S THE KIND OF SHIT ONLY CRAZY PEOPLE WOULD BELIEVE.

BEFORE WE LEAVE, AM I AT LEAST DRESSED RIGHT THIS TIME AROUND?

HAH. YEAH, YOU LOOK GREAT, KID.

THESE HELICOPTERS...

AREN'T THEY BEAUTIFUL?

THEY... HURT TO LOOK AT.

YEAH, THEY DO.

NOW, WHAT DOES THAT REMIND YOU OF?

...THEY AREN'T REAL? THEY'RE TULPAS?

THEY DIDN'T START THAT WAY, BUT YEAH, JUST ABOUT.

ALRIGHT, BOYS. TAKE HER UP.

I've always been pretty caught up with the idea of piggybacking, Cole.

When I started at the Department, there were rumors spreading around the country about the all-powerful secret hand of the government. The real government the little people never got to find out about.

The secret ways in which people were controlled. Like, the idea of fluoride in the water being a chemical agent to engineer a more docile public.

I had the idea early on to pay some of the people who work on fluoride treatment to be agents of the Department of Truth.

We didn't add any mind-control juice or dumb shit like that, but suddenly it was *true* that a secret government organization was putting fluoride in the water.

I guess I still don't know if that *did* anything, but that's what I fucking loved about the job. Picking up on the tall tales people were telling each other and figuring out how the Department of Truth could *live* in those stories.

Did the same thing with chemtrails, too. Didn't add anything to the engines, but I paid off the guys building commercial engines to be embedded agents of the DoT.

Those were the easy plays, though. It took a while to convince Lee to let me get the helicopters.

See, the conspiracy theories about unmarked black government helicopters went back to the 1970s. Came from a few different places.

There was a stretch of cattle mutilations right around then, and the ranchers reported seeing unmarked black helicopters arriving to investigate the scenes of the crimes.

Now...this was going on simultaneous to news of all sorts of crazy bullshit happening in and around Vietnam, and belief that secret factions within the government might have killed JFK was getting pretty widespread.

Then this one fella, Hal Lindsey, said that the locusts with the face of a man from the *Book of Revelation* were probably helicopters, but John didn't know how else to describe them.

A bunch of militia-minded types latched onto the black helicopters as this symbol of extrajudicial American power.

Secret helicopters filled with secret police that would just vanish you off the face of the earth. And the Christians in the mix believed the secret police were agents of the end times.

You kids think you understand the '70s, but you don't know *shit*. There were left-wing terrorists bombing office buildings, freaky-deeky cults popping up everywhere you looked, serial killers on the loose, the president was a crook, the vice president was an even *worse* crook, and the money in your bank account was worth less and less by the day.

Vietnam was going on, and when it was over, folks at home were spitting at kids in uniform for being baby killers. Seemed like all the artists were hopped up on drugs, but in an ugly way, not with that peace-and-love '60s vibe.

Then our lord and savior, Ronald Reagan, showed up with a bright and shiny dream about what America could look like, and a big chunk of the country believed in that dream because they were desperate to believe in *something*.

But the militia types didn't trust this big, all-powerful American super-state.

And once the Soviet Union collapsed, and it became clear that WW3 wasn't around the corner, they got worried that George Bush Sr. and his CIA cronies, and then the Clintons with their international free trade deals and government healthcare programs, were planning on secretly handing over American sovereignty to the United Nations as a part of the New World Order.

It all traced back to the idea that the globalist military-industrial complex that killed Kennedy was running the show, and that none of us were actually free anymore.

Anyway, I thought it'd be good to try and capture some of that belief, and wield it as a weapon.

I had this thought, around '92, that we should try and show the conspiracy nuts how much power we really had.

The militia movement was growing, and it was in the interest of Uncle Sam to strangle it in the crib. So I came in with my black helicopters to shut down a small armed camp in Ruby Ridge.

It didn't go well.

I wasn't *at* WACO, but I had set the machine in motion, designed the fucking blueprint for it at Ruby Ridge...

And what a filthy, ugly machine it was...I was a cocky young fuck. I thought I didn't care...

A kid and his mom was bad enough...but *twenty-five* kids died in WACO, just to fucking prove the kind of power everyone already knew the government had...

And then Oklahoma City... I was trying to tighten the threads right then. Trying to keep it all in line. I almost managed to stop the fucking thing...

MORE KIDS DEAD. ALL BECAUSE I WANTED TO WHIP MY DICK AROUND. AND FUCK KNOWS HOW MUCH MORE I KICKED OFF WITH ALL OF THAT.

YOU KNOW, COLE. THAT'S AROUND THE TIME I WENT TURNCOAT. THOUGH IT'D BE **YEARS** BEFORE I MET WITH MR. BARKER AND DID IT FOR REAL.

THAT'S WHEN I STOPPED BEING A KID PLAYING WITH TOYS AND STARTED BEING AFRAID OF THE KIND OF POWER WE WERE THROWING AROUND.

BARKER... HAWK, YOU'RE BLACK HAT?

YEAH. SORRY, KID. HAVE BEEN FOR A WHILE.

...WHERE IS THIS HELICOPTER GOING?

WHERE I MET YOU THE FIRST TIME, WHEN YOU WERE ONLY A KID. YOU KNEW I WAS A LIAR BEFORE I DID.

We're going to Milwaukee, Cole. It's like I said.

You're going home.

CHAPTER 10

MILWAUKEE, WI.

ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME?

IF I WAS, DON'T YOU THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER TO DROP YOU OUT OF A HELICOPTER? FUCK, I COULD HAVE SHOT YOU IN THE HEAD WHILE YOU SLEPT BACK IN DENVER.

NO, KID. THIS IS GOING TO BE MUCH HARDER THAN THAT.

THAT'S THE HOUSE I GREW UP IN.

HAVEN'T SEEN IT IN A WHILE?

NO.

MY PARENTS SPLIT A LITTLE WHILE AFTER EVERYTHING HAPPENED TO ME. MY GRANDPARENTS RAISED ME ON THE WEST SIDE OF TOWN, CLOSE TO BROOKFIELD.

EVEN ONCE I STARTED DRIVING, I NEVER CAME BACK.

YOUR MOM KEPT THE HOUSE, RIGHT?

YEAH. FOR A WHILE ANYWAYS.

SHE NEVER STOPPED BELIEVING IN WHAT SHE THOUGHT HAPPENED TO ME. SHE WASN'T WELCOME AT HOLIDAYS OR ANYTHING.

MY DAD WAS A BIT BETTER BUT HE NEVER HAD THE RIGHT WORDS.

I DON'T REALLY BLAME HIM...HOW DO YOU SAY YOU'RE SORRY FOR HANDING YOUR KID OFF TO A FAME-SEEKING FAD PSYCHOLOGIST?

I THINK YOU JUST SAY, "*I'M REAL FUCKING SORRY, I WAS SCARED, AND I THOUGHT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING.*"

YEAH. WELL, HE NEVER SAID THAT.

IF YOU NEVER WENT HOME AGAIN, THEN I BET **THIS** IS GOING TO BE A REAL TRIP FOR YOU.

OH SHIT.

TIME TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL, COLE.

BACK WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

C'MON, BOYS, IT'S FINE. I CAN HANDLE THE KID ALONE.

THOSE AREN'T MR. BARKER'S ORDERS.

I'M NOT THE RULE-FOLLOWING TYPE. BARKER KNOWS THAT.

I'M CALLING IT IN.

THAT'S FINE. YOU DO YOU.

ALRIGHT, KING COLE. STEP LIVELY.

WHAT IS THIS?

MR. BARKER WANTS YOU RECRUITED TO HIS TEAM. HE WANTS IT BAD ENOUGH THAT HE'S WILLING TO BURN HIS HIGHEST-RANKING PLANT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO OUT YOU?

LEE WAS EXPECTING US BACK IN WASHINGTON AS SOON AS WE WRAPPED UP IN DENVER. I BET YOU HE'S ALREADY PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER.

DOUBLY FAST, WITH RUBY RUNNING POINT. YOU'RE HER LITTLE BABY AGENT. SHE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO GET YOUR HAIR MUSSED. IT'S SWEET.

DO YOU REMEMBER THIS PLACE AT ALL?

NOT REALLY...

HAWK, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE FRISKED ME.

KID, DON'T JOKE AROUND WITH THAT THING. PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO COMPENSATE FOR SOMETHING, AND I'VE SEEN YOUR PRIVATE PICTURES.

I KNOW THE GOOD LORD SAW FIT TO ENDOW YOU GENEROUSLY.

I'M CALLING FOR BACKUP.

YOU STILL DON'T REALLY GET WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST, DO YOU? THE POWER AND THE SIMPLICITY OF WHAT BARKER IS OFFERING.

HE WANTS TO TEAR THE WHOLE ROTTEN SYSTEM DOWN, SO WE CAN START AGAIN FROM THE ASHES. THE PEOPLE WORKING FOR HIM, THEY'RE NOT MID-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS.

THEY'RE **ZEALOTS.** THEY HAVE A BONE TO PICK WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE, AND THEY'RE MORE THAN HAPPY TO DIE FOR THEIR CAUSE.

THERE ARE ABOUT TWELVE OF BARKER'S TOP MEN WITH THEIR EYES ON THIS PLACE RIGHT NOW, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE REAL WAY INTO THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

BEST-CASE SCENARIO, WE HAVE OURSELVES A SHOOTOUT THAT GETS A HELL OF A LOT MORE ATTENTION THAN EITHER SIDE WANTS RIGHT NOW.

SO PUT THE GUN DOWN, KID. WE'RE WALKING DOWN MEMORY LANE. LET'S TAKE IN THE SIGHTS.

THE SCHOOL DOESN'T LOOK AT ALL LIKE HOW I REMEMBER IT, BUT IT'S ALL A SHADOW OF A MEMORY ANYWAY.

THIRTY YEARS WILL DO THAT TO YOU.

LET'S SEE IF THIS ROOM DOES THE TRICK.

OH. WOW.

SEEMS LIKE THEY NEVER PUT THIS ROOM BACK INTO REAL USE. STARTED TREATING IT AS STORAGE. IT WAS BAD LUCK.

BECAUSE A LONG TIME AGO, A KID SAID THAT HIS TEACHER TOOK HIM TO A SECRET STAIRCASE BEHIND WHERE THEY STORED THE PLAY-DOH.

DOWN TO A DEEP, DARK BASEMENT, WHERE THEY WERE KEEPING A MONSTER.

HAWK... WHY ARE WE HERE?

YOU HAVE TO HAVE BEEN CURIOUS ENOUGH TO COME BACK, YEARS LATER. CHECK IT OUT FOR YOURSELF. HELL, MAYBE EVEN TALK TO YOUR OLD TEACHER.

SHE KILLED HERSELF. I DIDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL I WAS A TEENAGER, BUT SHE KILLED HERSELF A FEW YEARS AFTER ALL OF THIS HAPPENED. I WANTED TO REACH OUT AND APOLOGIZE...

BUT I COULDN'T. EVEN WHEN THE LIES WERE ALL EXPOSED.

IT REALLY FEELS LIKE THE TRUTH SHOULD BE MORE POWERFUL, DOESN'T IT?

THAT SHINING A LIGHT ON THE LIES SHOULD MAKE THE WORLD BETTER.

BUT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, IT DOESN'T DO JACK SHIT.

THIS IS THE SHELF FROM MY MEMORIES... THIS IS WHERE THEY WOULD TAKE US.

ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE.

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, HAWK? THEY SEARCHED THE SCHOOL. THERE NEVER **WAS** A BASEMENT. THERE WASN'T A STAIRCASE.

WATCH YOUR HEAD. YOU'RE A BIT TALLER THAN THE LAST TIME YOU DID ALL OF THIS.

SO, WHAT—IS THIS WHERE YOU REVEAL TO ME THAT IT WAS REAL THE WHOLE TIME?

FUCK NO. OF COURSE NOT.

THIS IS WHERE YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE SATANIC PANIC. WHAT'S THE IDEA BEHIND IT?

YOU WANT A HISTORY LESSON HERE? **NOW?** WHY DON'T **YOU** EXPLAIN IT TO ME, HAWK?

I TALK TOO MUCH AS IT IS. AND YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING THIS SHIT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

JESUS, FINE... IT'S A CULMINATION OF SUPER-STITION AND SCAPEGOATING THAT GOES BACK A THOUSAND YEARS. MAYBE MORE.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT INSTANCES YOU CAN POINT TO, BUT IT ALL REALLY STARTS TO SPREAD IN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, AFTER THE TURN OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM.

ROME HAS FALLEN, AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH RISES IN ITS PLACE TO BECOME THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF EUROPE. THEY UNITE ALL THESE WARRING KINGDOMS UNDER A SINGULAR FAITH. THEY ADOPT SOME USEFUL TRADITIONS AND FESTIVALS OF THE OLD PAGAN RELIGIONS...

BUT THEY ROUND UP THE OTHER BELIEFS AND BIND THEM ALL TOGETHER, CREATING A PASTICHE OF PAGANISM THAT THEY COMBINE WITH LOOSE BITS OF SCRIPTURE AND CALL THE END RESULT **SATAN.**

THEY EFFECTIVELY CREATE HELL AS A PUNISHMENT TO PUSH PEOPLE TO CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY. IF THE HEATHENS KEEP TO THEIR PAGAN WAYS, THEY WILL BE CONDEMNED TO A LAKE OF ETERNAL FIRE.

THIS NEW CHRISTIAN VISION OF HELL IS A POWERFUL IDEA, AND IT SPREADS ALL THROUGH EUROPE. SINCE PEOPLE WANT TO PROVE THEY ARE DEVOUT, THEY BEGIN TO FEAR IDEAS THAT MIGHT CONDEMN THEM TO ETERNAL DAMNATION.

AND SO, A DEEP FEAR OF PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS GRIPS EUROPE. THE PAGANS ARE PAINTED WITH THE BRUSH OF WITCHCRAFT AND DEVIL WORSHIP...BUT IT'S WORSE WITH THE JEWS.

THEY LIVED IN COMMUNITIES ALL OVER EUROPE, KEEPING TO THEIR FAITH AND THEIR ANCIENT RITUALS, WHICH SEEMED ARCANE AND MYSTERIOUS TO THE CHRISTIAN POPULATIONS.

NOW, THE NEXT BIT ISN'T PROVEN BY ANY HISTORICAL MEANS, JUST A SUPPOSITION BASED ON THE LIMITED SOURCES FROM THE TIME.

AFTER THE FIRST CRUSADE, SOME OF THE FIGHTERS CAME BACK FROM THE HOLY LAND WITH RUMORS. STORIES OF JEWS WHO KILLED THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN RATHER THAN BEING FORCIBLY CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY.

IN TIME, THE RUMOR, WHICH WAS PROBABLY NEVER TRUE TO BEGIN WITH, LOSES ITS CONTEXT. IT BECOMES A GAME OF TELEPHONE, TWISTED BY PREJUDICE AND A FEAR OF HELL.

THAT ENDED IN THE MOST COMMON FORM OF WHAT WOULD BECOME KNOWN AS THE BLOOD LIBEL. THE BELIEF THAT JEWS BAKED THEIR MATZOS BREAD WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRISTIAN BABIES.

AND SO...WHEN A CHILD WOULD BE FOUND DEAD BY MYSTERIOUS MEANS, THE LOCAL CHRISTIANS WOULD POINT THEIR FINGERS TOWARD THE INSULAR JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND KILL THE ONES THEY BELIEVED TO BE RESPONSIBLE.

THOSE ARE THE CORROSIVE THREADS OF THOUGHT THAT WEAVE TOGETHER THROUGH THE LAST THOUSAND YEARS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO TWO VERY HUMAN INSTINCTS--A FEAR OF OUTSIDERS, AND A DRIVE TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN.

BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT, ISN'T IT? DON'T YOU THINK?

SURE. IT'S MORE THAN THAT.

I DON'T LIKE TO ASCRIBE INTENT...I THINK THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH MOST CONSPIRACY THEORIES ON THEIR FACE. WE ALWAYS WANT THERE TO BE A PERSON WHO MADE A DECISION...

BUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BENEFITED TREMENDOUSLY FROM THIS WAY OF THINKING. THEY HAD THE POWER TO DETERMINE WHO GOT TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AND WHO DID NOT.

THEY GOT TO CHOOSE WHO WERE THE VILLAINS, AND WHO WERE THE GOOD PEOPLE.

YEAH. THAT'S THE SHIT RIGHT THERE.

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS.

SO, WHAT? YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH ARE THE BAD GUYS AND BLACK HAT ARE THE GOOD GUYS?

THAT'S YOUR JOB? THAT'S WHY YOU'VE BROUGHT ME DOWN HERE?

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN **TOLD** TO DO, YES.

DID YOU **MAKE** THIS PLACE, HAWK? IS THIS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING IN SECRET, TRYING TO MANIFEST THIS PLACE IN REALITY, TO TEACH ME A LESSON?

BARKER THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE A BIT MORE SUSCEPTIBLE HERE.

AND HE FIGURED WHERE BETTER FOR YOU TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT **ME**.

WHAT TRUTH?

YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, DO YOU? I MEAN, THAT'S PROBABLY FOR THE BEST. I REALLY MEAN THAT.

I WAS A YOUNG BUCK AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH. LEE WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS IN POWER AT THAT POINT, AND HE WANTED TO BE MORE PROACTIVE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR.

I'D CATCH HIM SITTING AND LISTENING TO THE SPEECHES REAGAN WAS GIVING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, TALKING ABOUT AMERICA AS THE SHINING CITY ON THE HILL.

HE WANTED PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN THAT SHINING CITY. THIS SMILING WHITE CHRISTIAN AMERICA THAT REAGAN WAS SELLING TO THE COUNTRY EVERY COMMERCIAL BREAK.

...called *Michelle Remembers*. It was by a young woman and her shrink, who purported to have unearthed all of these childhood memories of her parents abusing her in twisted satanic rituals.

Now, remember--we were a society that had just watched the hippies of the 1960s turn into the cultists of the 1970s, ending with Jonestown-style mass suicides. So, it was all a bit more credulous at the time.

Never mind that the kind of Satanists that showed up in *Michelle Remembers* only ever existed in fiction, in movies like *Rosemary's Baby* or *The Omen*...

It was my job to figure out how to play with the narrative to help tip the balance in favor of that America. Televangelism was growing fast, and I put my thumb on the scale to let those whackadoos take up a bit more air time.

But I knew that people like to define themselves in opposition to something. So, let's say you have a bunch of threads coming together... All these homosexuals dying off from a mysterious blood disease, the biggest cities in the country bankrupt and rotting from the insides, and this atheistic superpower that could wipe us off the face of the earth with nukes. And then there was this book. This beautiful, monstrous little book...

In real life, Satanists are just weird goth libertarians who like to have sex parties. Virtually no organized form of Satanism worships Satan without reclassifying him as a metaphor for being anti-authoritarian. They aren't out there trying to sell their souls in defiance of a Christian god. Most of them are atheists.

But, anyway...the idea that the young liberals with hippie-ish long hair working in your preschools and daycares might secretly be Satanists, trying to corrupt your children?

And that these musicians who were playing with some of the imagery just to seem cool and rebellious to middle America, were actually devout Satan-worshipping people?

Those ideas had legs, and they reinforced the kind of beliefs we wanted Americans to have. So it was my job to take little embers of all of it and fan them into a flame that could consume the country.

AND THERE YOU WERE...AND YOU HAD THE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE THAT I'D BEEN WAITING FOR. THE TROUBLE WITH ALL OF THE OTHER PRESCHOOL TRIALS AND STORIES IS THAT THERE WAS NEVER ANYBODY TO PIN IT ALL ON.

THERE WERE THE TEACHERS, SURE, BUT THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY THE ONES GETTING DUPED INTO IT ALL...IT WAS A HUNDRED JONESTOWNS WITHOUT A JIM JONES.

BUT THEN YOU DREW A PICTURE FROM YOUR IMAGINATION OF A MAN WITH A STAR SCARRED INTO HIS FACE WHO WANTED YOU TO EAT BABIES.

AND YOU WERE THIS CUTE LITTLE ALL-AMERICAN KID, BLOND AND SOFT-SPOKEN. YOU DIDN'T COME ACROSS AS A BRAT. YOU WEREN'T BOUNCING OFF THE WALLS.

I WAS GOING TO MAKE YOU A CELEBRITY, COLE. I WAS GOING TO HAVE THEM PRAYING FOR YOU IN EVERY MEGACHURCH AROUND THE COUNTRY. I WAS SETTING IT ALL UP, AND YOUR MOM HAD MONEY IN HER EYES.

WE STARTED LOCAL. AN INTERVIEW THAT RAN A PICTURE YOU MADE OF THE STAR-FACED MAN, WITH YOU TALKING ABOUT YOUR CASE.

I REMEMBER CRYING ON MY WAY TO THE STUDIO. MY MOM DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL MY STORY ANYMORE.

SHE KEPT PUSHING...

YEAH. SORRY ABOUT THAT.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT STOPPED ME FROM FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH IT ALL.

What stopped me is what I saw in my hotel room the night after we aired the first interview.

OH...YES...

I AM...VERY HUNGRY...

WHAT THE FUCK.

FEED ME!!

It took me almost an hour to kill the fucking thing. It wasn't fully formed, still flickering in and out of existence. An unfinished idea...

But I saw how powerful it was, even then. And that changed something in me.

NOW...I WANTED TO TIP THE BALANCE A BIT. USE BELIEF TO MY BENEFIT... BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO PUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT OUT INTO THE WORLD.

SO, I PULLED THE PLUG. SHUT DOWN THE COVERAGE, LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. KEPT THAT THING FROM SPREADING.

LEE WAS FURIOUS WITH ME, SAYING THAT I WAS AFRAID OF GHOSTS. BUT I KNEW THAT IF I MANIFESTED THAT THING INTO THE WORLD, IT WAS GOING TO START EATING KIDS. **REAL** KIDS.

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE WOULD BELIEVE IT WAS GOING TO DO.

ARE YOU **SERIOUS**? ARE YOU TRYING TO GET ME TO THINK YOU'RE ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS?

ANGELS ARE ONLY AS REAL AS WE MAKE THEM, COLE. C'MON, KID. HAVEN'T YOU BEEN FUCKING LISTENING TO ME ALL THIS TIME?

YOU WOULDN'T LET HIM BECOME REAL BEFORE, AND NOW YOU'RE SIDING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO DELIBERATELY SET **OUT** TO MAKE HIM REAL?

SO, HERE'S WHERE WE GET TO MR. BARKER'S OFFER.

WAIT...DID I JUST HEAR GUNFIRE?

FOCUS, KID. MR. BARKER WANTED YOU TO HAVE THIS AS A GIFT.

HEYYYYYYY GOOOOOLE!!

I SAVED YOU THE EYES.

I KNOW YOU LIKE TO TOP THEM LIKE GRAPES AGAINST THE TOP OF YOUR MOUTH. YUM YUM YUMMMM...

WHAT THE FUCK...

HE'S YOURS. HE'S BEEN USEFUL TO BLACK HAT, BUT THEY DON'T NEED HIM IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS. NOT LIKE THEY NEED **YOU.**

SO MR. BARKER THINKS YOU SHOULD TAKE THIS GUN AND FIRE EVERY BULLET INTO THAT MONSTER'S HEAD, AND GET OVER ALL YOUR SHIT.

AND THEN THE TWO OF US ARE GOING TO WALK THROUGH THE OTHER DOOR, AND IT'LL TAKE US STRAIGHT TO MR. BARKER'S OFFICE, IN THE REAL HEADQUARTERS OF BLACK HAT.

AND WHAT IF I SAY NO?

WELL, MR. BARKER SAYS THAT IN THAT CASE, I SHOULD THROW YOU IN THERE WITH THE FUCKING MONSTER AND LET HIM EAT YOU LIKE HE'S BEEN WAITING THIRTY YEARS TO DO.

BUT THERE'S ANOTHER OPTION.

YOU TAKE THAT GUN I DIDN'T FRISK OFF OF YOU, AND YOU SHOOT ME IN THE SHOULDER.

HEHEHE HEHEHE!

NAUGHTY NAUGHTY.

YOU DON'T KILL THAT FUCKING THING. YOU TAKE IT BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT AND MILK IT FOR EVERY PIECE OF INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN GET. IT'S BEEN WALKING BY BARKER'S SIDE FOR **MONTHS** NOW.

IT KNOWS SHIT THAT EVEN **I** DON'T KNOW, IF YOU CAN MAKE IT TALK.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

I **DID** FRISK A CELL PHONE OFF OF YOU. I DIALED RUBY. SHE'S BEEN LISTENING THE WHOLE FUCKING TIME I'VE BEEN TALKING, UP TO ABOUT A MINUTE AGO.

WHICH IS WHY SHE KNEW HOW MANY AGENTS TO SEND TO TAKE OUT THE TWELVE MEN IN THE VANS UP THERE.

SHE'LL BE RACING DOWN HERE TO GET YOU SOON ENOUGH.

WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING **ON**?

SOME WEIRD GODDAMN SHIT, COLE. C'MON, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION?

LISTEN TO ME **VERY CAREFULLY** NOW. THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND. I'VE BEEN TEACHING YOU ALL OF THIS SHIT THESE LAST FEW WEEKS FOR A REASON.

I NEED THERE TO BE SOMEONE UP IN THE INNER CIRCLE OF THE DEPARTMENT WHO KNOWS WHAT I KNOW ABOUT TULPAS AND MAGIC AND ALL THAT SHIT.

BECAUSE BACK IN 1963, A WEIRD FUCKING THING HAPPENED.

There was the Lee Harvey Oswald that got snatched up by the Department of Truth, and there was the Lee that got killed by Jack Ruby.

One of them was the man who had been an agent with our department since the late '50s. And the other was the shadowy idea of an assassin that was spreading in the press.

I think the department saved the wrong Lee.

I don't think it's a *man* running the Department of Truth.

I think it's a living embodiment of every horrible thing that people think the government is capable of, rolled up into a man-shaped thing.

YOU THINK... LEE IS A TULPA?

TULPAS ARE WRONG THINGS. THEY ARE SCARS ON REALITY, AND THEY ARE DANGEROUS. I THINK LEE IS THE COLD, DRIPPING, WET BLACK HEART OF AMERICA.

THAT'S WHY I TURNED MY BACK ON THE DEPARTMENT.

BUT BARKER...

BARKER IS **WORSE.** HE'S WORSE IN WAYS I DIDN'T SEE UNTIL I STARTED WALKING BY HIS SIDE.

AND WHAT HE HAS PLANNED FOR THIS COUNTRY...COLE, *"MONSTROUS"* DOESN'T EVEN COME CLOSE.

ALRIGHT. NOW, SHOOT ME, KID. WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE TIME.

SHIT, OKAY.

BLAM

FUCK! SHIT, THAT FUCKING HURTS...

WHY ARE YOU TRUSTING ME WITH ALL OF THIS? WHY DO YOU THINK I CAN FIX THIS?

BECAUSE YOU WERE CHOSEN BY **HER.** THE WOMAN IN RED. BABALON.

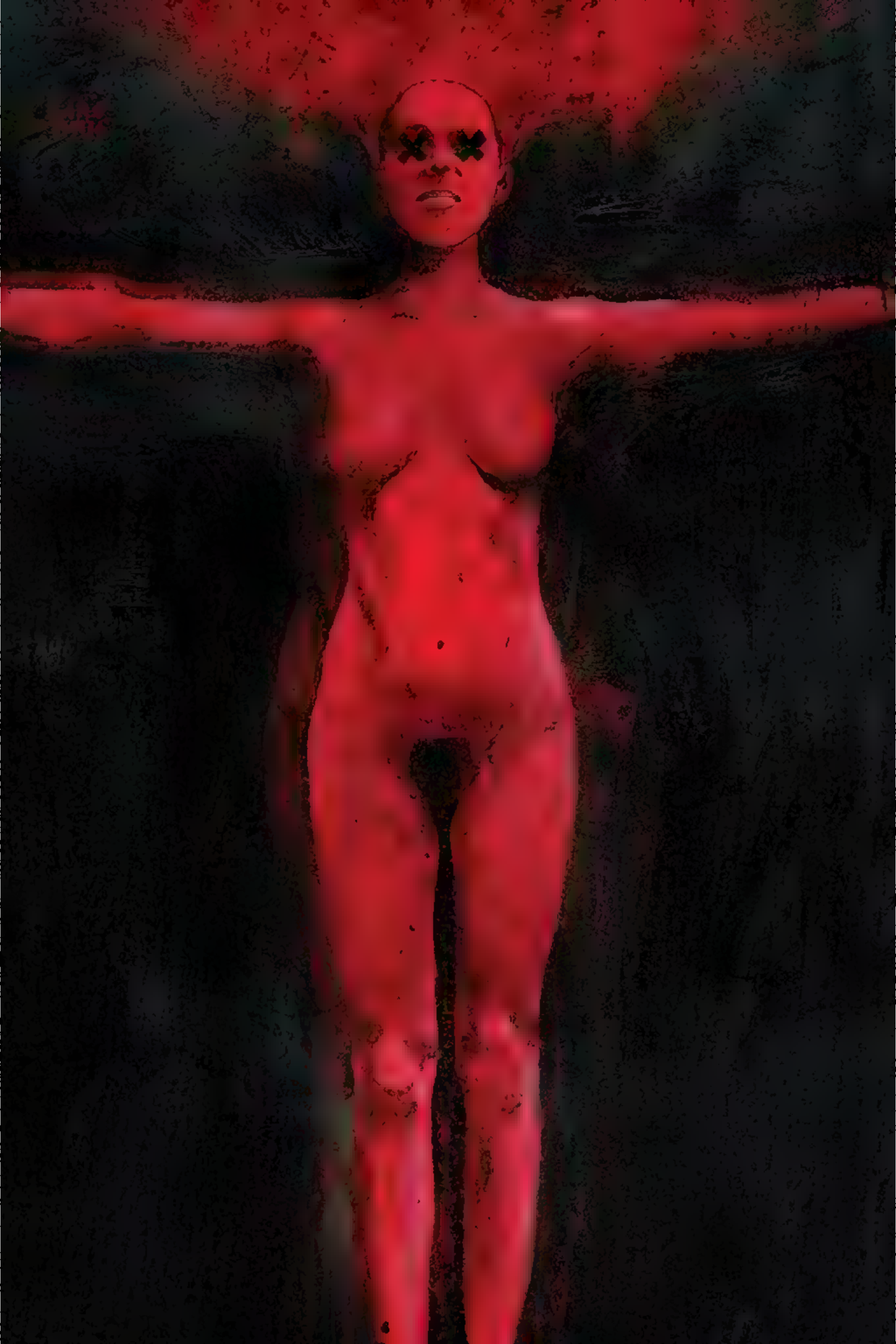
IT'S ALL GOING TO COME DOWN TO YOU IN THE END, SON.

MAKE ME PROUD.

YESSSS... COLEY COLEY COLE...

MAKE US ALL PROUD.

DEVIATION 3

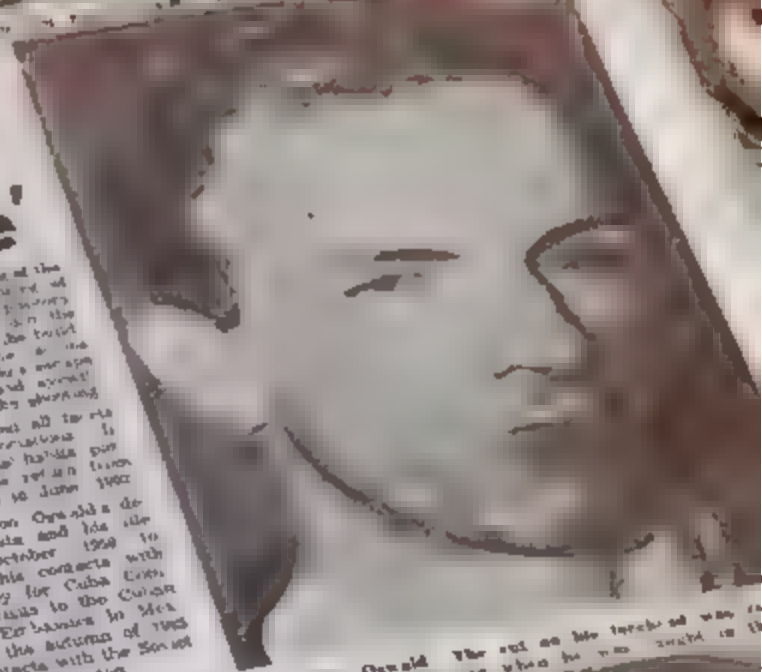


WONDER
STORIES

CANADA BUILDS
FLYING SAUCER

Secret Service and FBI Are Censured

Warren Probe Finds Oswald 'Acted Alone'



Lee Harvey Oswald

UFO

WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION

ARTHUR B. REEVE Creator of CRAIG KENNEDY

SCIENTIFIC
DETECTIVE
MONTHLY

I look like a fucking *idiot*.

Language, Lee.

Some moments *call* for coarser language, kid.

The director is going to have us both *skinned* as it is. I don't need you *cursing* at me.

I still think all I needed was some *sunglasses*.

Really? With all of *this* back in the news? Lee Harvey Oswald is one of the most famous people in America.

My *corpse* is, anyways.

Warren Probe Finds Oswald Acted Alone

You aren't supposed to be walking around in the world. Can you *imagine* if you were spotted?

You think I'll get recognized like *this*?!

:snort:

WHAT?

You didn't need to shave your EYEBROWS!

You told me to shave my head!

HA HA HA

BALD PEOPLE HAVE EYEBROWS!

God damn you.

Language.

Fucking, cock-sucking, cunt-licking--

I look like a fucking *mutant* from one of your magazines.

I just really think we should have run all of this up the ladder. The director was in with President Johnson last week, and I know they're all worried *sick*...

If we *pull off* what we're trying to do...

You're getting your *hopes* up, kid. You want to *believe*, and that's dangerous. It means you're looking for *specific answers*.

I'm looking for an *operations manual*. And if this chump was there for what he *says* he was, that might be exactly what we're going to get.

I like the big idea. This trip seems a little... I don't know...

What?

I mean. *Magic*. It's all magic. Doesn't it all feel a bit *hokey* to you?

Says the kid in the tinfoil hat reading about flying saucers.

Lee...

If we accept that the world changes if enough people *believe*, then you can't rule out people who believe that they can change the world with *their* beliefs.

I think it's *ALL* hokey. I think *you're* plenty hokey. But there's something to this...

It's the end of the *world* out there. Why *NOT* magic?

You saw something too, didn't you? Down in Dallas.

I'm not supposed to talk about any of that. Don't let this field trip of ours get you acting too *familiar*, okay?

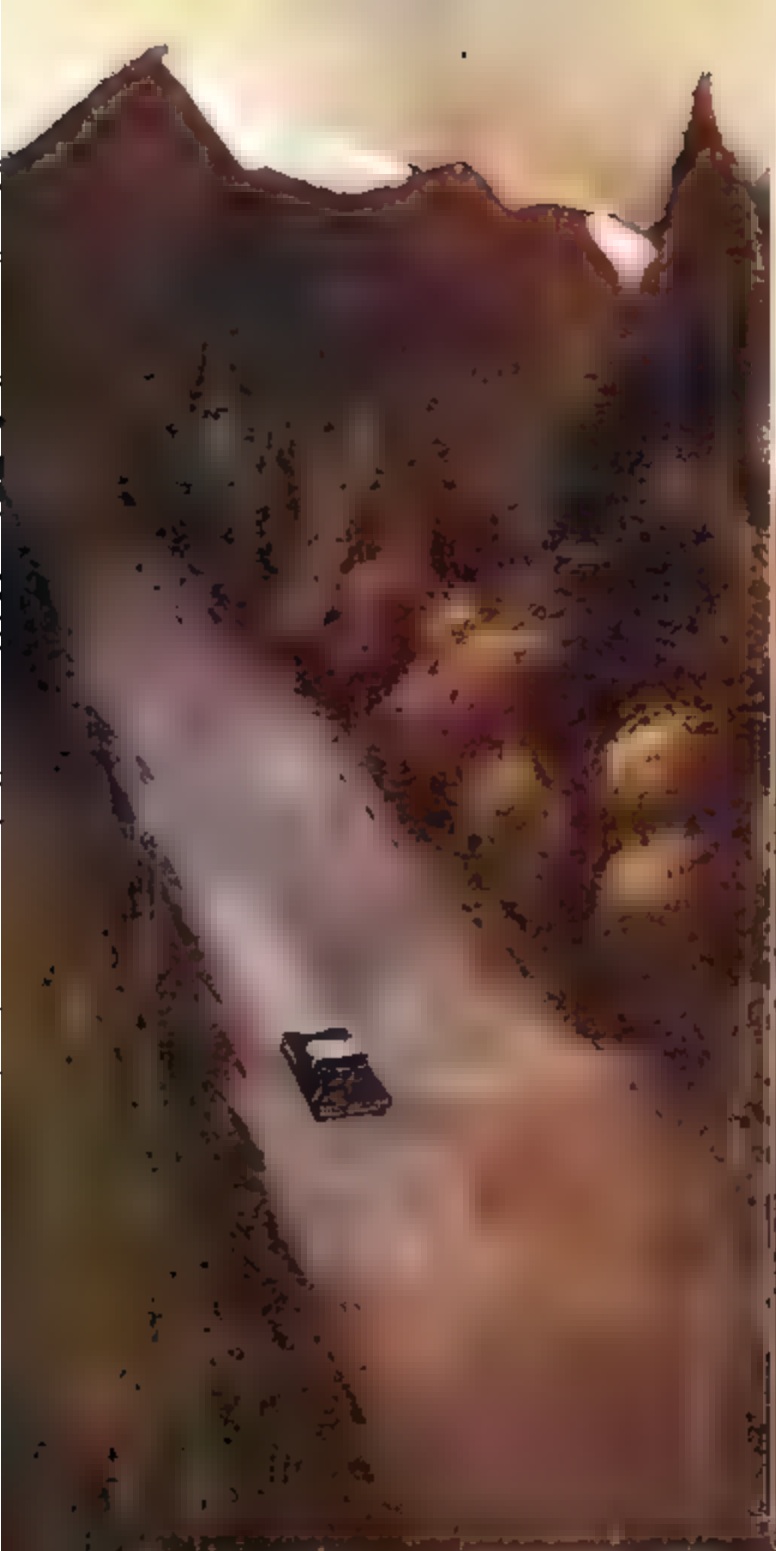
But you *saw* something there.

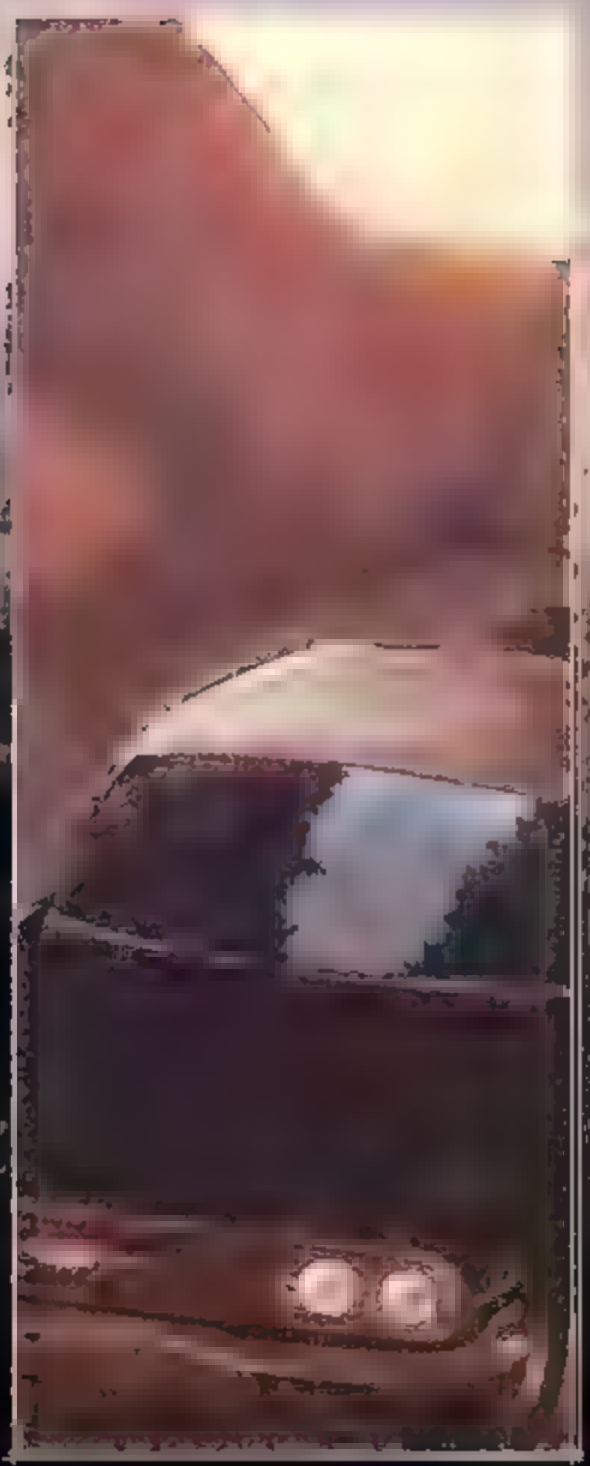
Yeah. Yeah, I did.

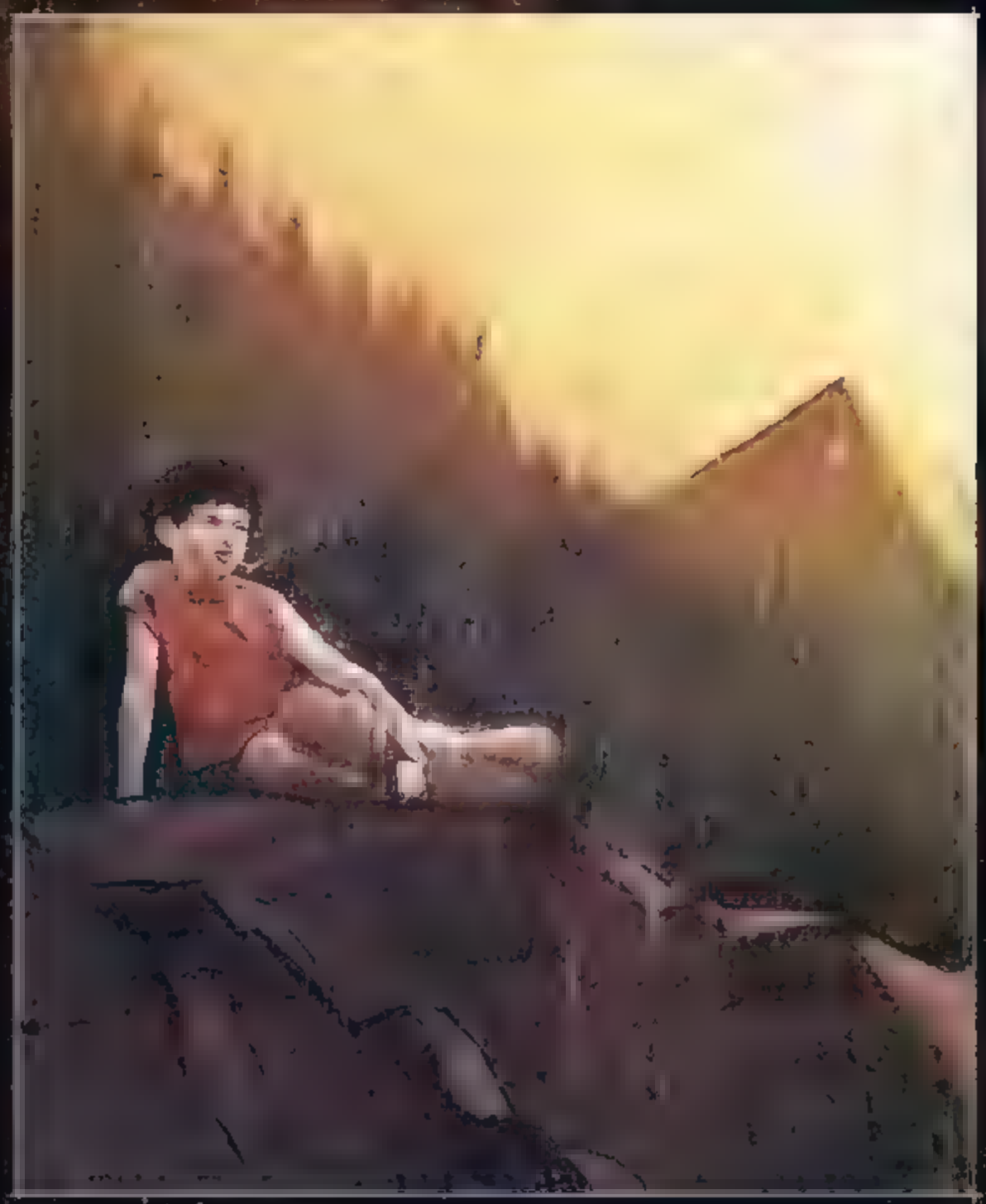
Now, let's get a move on.

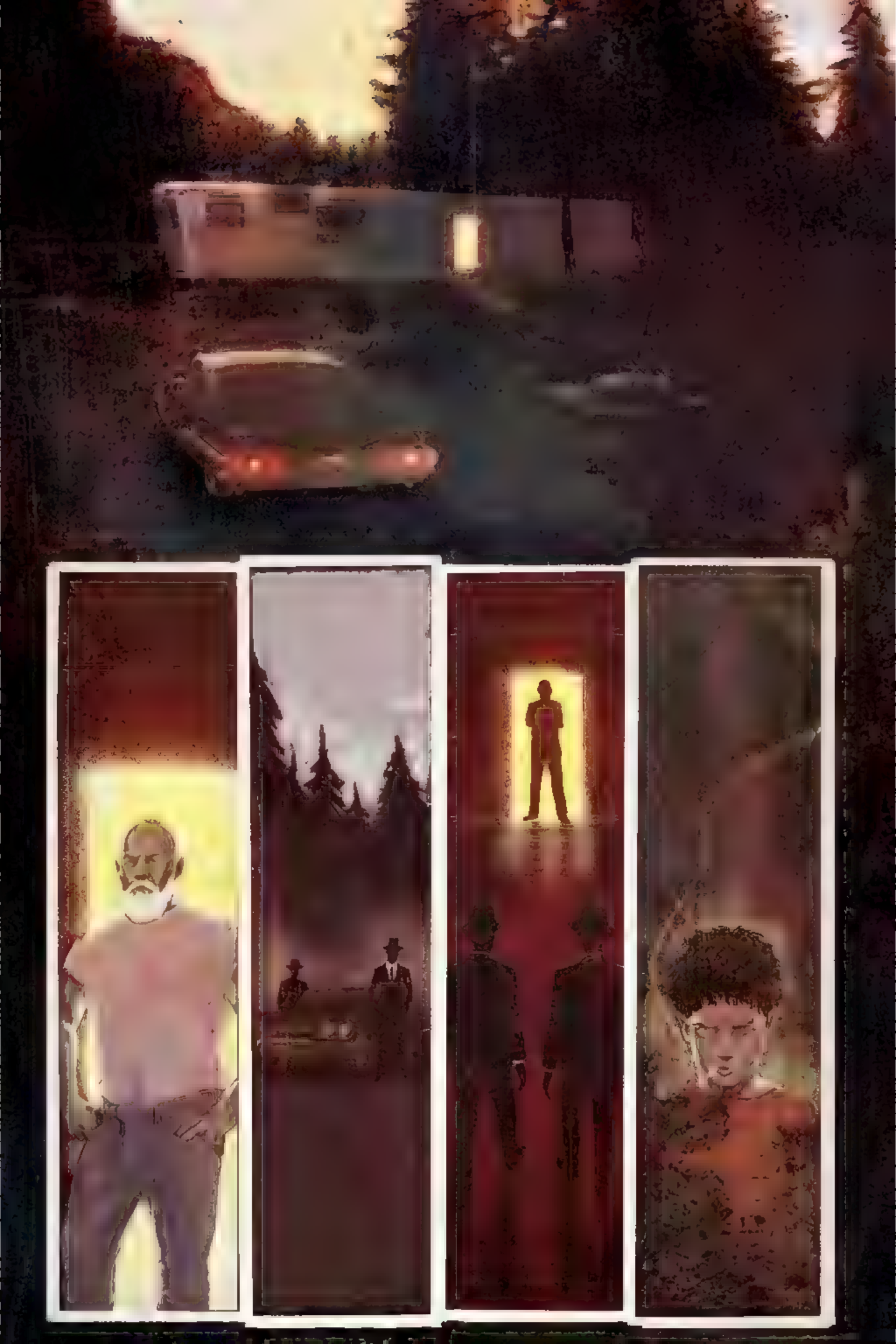
We have a ways to drive yet.

Rocket









You're not too easy to find.

Could be that's the fucking *point*.

You government?

No. / Yes.

I'm not *interested* in talking to the government.

I'm sorry.

We *work* with the government, but they don't know we're here. We took our *own* initiative. We wanted to hear what you could tell us.

The *fuck* do you think I can tell you?

We want to know about the *Babalon Working*.

The fuck kind of government men *ARE* you?

The kind that's curious about all the weird shit happening in the shadows, all over the country. The ones who see it happening and are trying to figure out why.

Your hat's got silver bits coming out of it...

That's...that's *my* business, alright?

Yeah.

I don't like being up top like this.

BOY! We're going down.

Suit your fucking self!

Cute kid.

Yeah.

You built all this yourself?

I'm a fucking *engineer*. 'Course I did.

You'll be wanting one soon enough. It's all just going to get *worse* and *worse* out there.

The *Aeon* of fucking *Horus*.

Fuck me.

Tell you, I was glad I had this built out in '61. All that *Cuba* horseshit.

Kept telling the boy's mother that it'd just happen one night. I'd tell her, first we'd see the flash of light.

Then we'd feel the *heat*, until our brains were boiling, and our skin was sloshing off our bones. Unbelievable pain, and then oblivion.

She left after that. Probably leeching off some fucking *musician* or some shit these days.

She wasn't willing to see the inevitable.

Drink? I distill it myself down here. Stronger than the piss you can get in a bar.

I'm fine.

Why the hell not.

Jesus. The fuck *IS* that?!

It's *efficient* is what it is.

How the fuck do some suits in the government know about the Babalon Working?

There're *plenty* of suits who know. They almost got Jack Parsons on an *espionage* charge back in the '50s. And the FBI's been watching that Hubbard fellow.

And his Church of Science Fiction...

Scientology.

Whatever. The *Dianetics* shit.

Getting files on the two of them was easy. Making *sense* of them was not. Finding somebody who was in the same Lodge as the two of them when it was all going down...

Also not easy.

Okay.

You know the truth, don't you?

Tell me, what truth do I know?

You know that this is when it all went to shit. They opened the door...

Tell me.

Jack Whiteside Parsons helped found the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He helped make the rockets Kennedy said would take us to the moon.

He was also a devout follower of the teachings of Aleister Crowley, and was the leader of the Agape Lodge of the Ordo Templi Orientis.

That's where I met him. Liked him plenty at the time.

But in 1945, this science fiction writer, Hubbard, moves into Parsons' mansion in Pasadena.

Back then, all those science fiction/fantasy mag types loved dipping their toes in magic. The big names of the day were all friendly with Parsons.

Hubbard was more of a... I don't know. A hanger-on. He liked being close to the action. And he loved Crowley's work.

Crowley's whole deal was recontextualizing the Christian apocalypse from the Book of Revelations through ritual sex magic.

He was the Great Beast 666, and through his sex magic, he courted the divine feminine. The Scarlet Woman, who he called Babalon.

Here's what you *suits* need to understand.

Magic is real. It *works*. It has impact on the world. The human brain is incredibly powerful, and you can *rewire* it.

You let yourself become a *symbol*, in a whole fucking *history* of symbols. knowing that history and all of its meaning, and you open yourself up to a kind of *communion*...

Ecstasy of the *body* becomes ecstasy of the *mind*, and you see things from all new angles that *recategorize* the mundane world around you.

You've not just fucking some guy's wife at a house party, you're communing with the divine feminine and touching the mysteries of the universe with your MIND.

And the power you carry forward from that kind of communion... It can reshape a person, how that person interacts with the world, and...THIS is the bit that people don't quite understand...

It can change the world itself.

You know that Hitler's whole brain trust was deep into the occult.

Enough so that Crowley was working with British Intelligence, helping them make sense of the weird front of the war that Churchill barely understood.

That's when Crowley started getting these letters.

Letters that say this upstart rocket scientist and his science fiction writer pal are going to try to do a Working...a summoning...of the divine feminine in earnest.

Usually in these sorts of things...okay, so let's use *angels*, because I bet you fucks know angels.

Let's say you're trying to commune with *God*, and so you try and *summon* something down from *heaven*.

But you don't try and summon God himself. You know that idea is *too big* for you to grapple with in your puny little human brain.

So you summon down some *lesser angel* you can *grasp*, and in communing with the angel, you *still* learn about yourself and your *god*.

I don't think you can *really* summon *angels*.

I'm just using words you fuckers will *understand*. Don't get caught up on the details, listen to the *ideas*. Catch the gist.

But these fuckers. Hubbard and Parsons...they're hopped up on the American Dream.

Parson is building rocket ships that'll take us to the moon, and Hubbard is writing stories about what we might find out in the cosmos.

They don't want some lesser form. They want God in their hands. They want the Scarlet Woman.

Crowley warns them against it. The other fucks in the temple warn them too.

So, a rocket scientist and a science fiction writer go out to the Mojave Desert to commune with their god.

Parsons is out there in a sandstorm jacking off, with Hubbard putting it all down on paper. And something happens...

They open a door. A door to something...they didn't understand. And the door stayed open.

The SCARLET WOMAN is set free. With eyes that can see more than any of us can see. And then the rest comes forth.

Flying saucers all over America. The crash in Roswell, New Mexico. The Cold War starts in earnest. The Iron Curtain goes up.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists creates THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK and sets it at seven minutes to midnight.

Hubbard and Parsons's girlfriend, Sara Northrup, conned Parsons out of a good deal of money to buy yachts to sail around the world.

Crowley called Parsons a weak fool, and Hubbard and Northrup "obvious victim-prowling swindlers."

After their business partnership dissolved, the relationship was fucked to shit.

Crowley died the following year.

Folks who know Hubbard say that, ever since, it's like he's channeling something from beyond. He adopted a kind of manic intensity...and started talking about a new kind of psychology.

Parsons went the opposite route...the Cold War had the country fearing subversive types, and Parsons' history with OTO was about as subversive as you can get.

In 1952, a chemical explosion incinerated him in his private laboratory. The fire he started back in the desert caught up with him, burning him from the inside out.

And it's going to catch all of us too. **We're ALL GOING TO BURN.**

The door is open. This is **Babalon's** country now. This is the **Aeon of Horus**...and we're not getting some fucking **NEW AGE**...

We're going to eat ourselves **ALIVE**. And **that's what she WANTS.**

The fucking **Catholics** were right. This is the **END OF THE FUCKING WORLD.**

The **LAKE OF FIRE** is going to **SWALLOW US ALL UP.**

And we DESERVE IT.

Okay. I'm done talking. Get the fuck out of my bunker.

That was a lot of *hooey*, don't you think?

When we get back to the archives, I can show you the files we nicked from the Soviets and the Brits.

Crowley *WAS* working with them. He knew the secret that we *all* know.

But there's more to all of this.

A *Woman in Red* who wants to end the world, behind all the *UFOs* and whatnot...

Do you believe in that?

DO YOU SEE?

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEE

I just believe what I *see*, kid.

But I have seen things. And we have *work* to do if we want to catch one of these UFOs. That still feels like the way to go.

Hm.

Looks like some of the *local wildlife* snuck into the car.

He's fucking **NUTS!** Take me *with* you.

We're not taking you with us, kid.

You look pretty nuts, too. But I think he's liable to *cook me and eat me.*

He starts looking hungry, you go down to the road and walk the five miles into town.

They're all fucking nuts down *there*, too.

What's your name, kid?

Hawk.

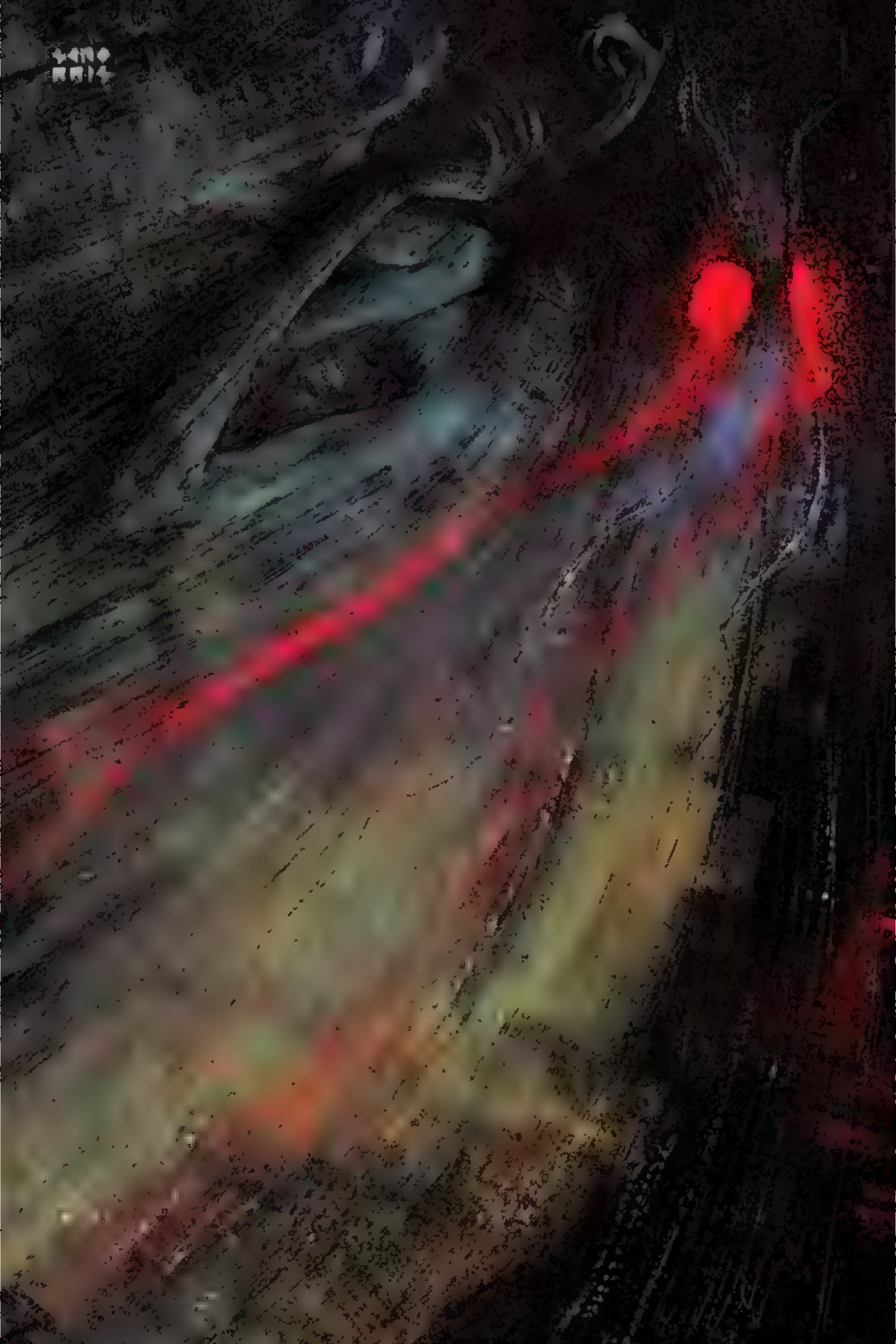
Hawk Harrison.

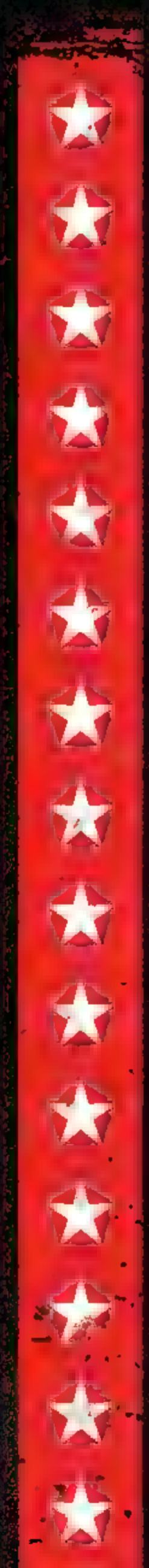
*Your dad's nuts, but he **knows** things. Get him to **teach** you without making you nuts too.*

And maybe we'll have another conversation when you're older, okay?

Yeah. Maybe we will.

DEVIATION 4





DEVIATION FOUR:
Point Pleasant

Interview Transcript
Subject: DALTON HYNES
Internal Use Only
Ref.: [redacted]

[redacted]: State your name for the record.

HYNES: Oh, um... Dalton Hynes. I... uh... I go by "Doc."

HYNES: Junior Archivist. Department of Truth.

Point Pleasant, W Va.

'Strange Flying Objects' Reported in W. Va.

POINT PLEASANT, W Va - | the volunteer fire department was | descriptions of the objects can be
Sigh | called to assist near the roads | attributed to that of geese migration
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prox
coul

[redacted]: You can relax, son.

HYNES: Oh, sure.

[redacted]: Do you feel like you can relax?

HYNES: It's just my own... I'm not good at relaxing in the best of times. And this isn't exactly, well... It's not ideal. I don't like being in trouble. I never got in trouble in school.

[redacted]: This isn't school.

HYNES: I know that, sir. I sure as heck know that now.

[redacted]: So, where did all of this start?

HYNES: It started with a theory, I guess. Since you founded this Department, it's been focused on messaging. We know there is a tipping point of belief that can materially change the world, so we make sure the majority is focused on believing in the America we want them to believe in. But if you take that idea to its extreme... If you start asking yourself, what if enough people believed in something strange? Could they manifest that strange fiction in the world? Lee wondered if that was already happening. If these UFOs were manifestations...

[redacted]: Can you define what you mean by manifestations?

HYNES: Unreal things made real by collective belief. Wild Fictions.

[redacted]: So, that was your theory.

HYNES: Our theory was that if we could get enough people to believe in something, we could force the balance into tipping deliberately. Create one of these Wild Fictions ourselves. And capture it.

[redacted]: You wanted to catch a UFO.

HYNES: Lee did. Yes.

[redacted]: How did you go about doing that?

HYNES: Inelegantly. First, we used the Department plants in newspapers all over the country to spread stories of "strange flying objects." That's the phrase we used. And for a while it seemed to work. There were mass sightings of UFOs all over the country in 1966, and we noticed the stories were catching in West Virginia in particular. Right along the Ohio River Valley. So we tried to focus our efforts there. Tried to narrow it down enough. The trouble was, our language... It wasn't specific enough.

[redacted]: Not specific enough?

HYNES: "Strange flying objects." We realized it when the first reports started coming in.

"MOTHMAN"
Scarberry/Mallette Sighting
Linda Scarberry Police Report
Point Pleasant, WV
November 1966

As soon as our lights hit it, it was gone. It spread its wings a little and went straight up into the air. When we got to the armory it was flying over our car. We were going between 100 and 105 mph down that straight stretch and that thing was just gliding back and forth over the back end of the car. As we got there in front of the lights by the resort it dived at our car and went away.

I could hear the wings flapping as if to get more speed as it went up. We were all terrified and kept yelling for Roger to go faster. As we came into that straight stretch by C. C. Lewis' [farm] the thing was over our car again. Then it disappeared as we came into the lights by C. C. Lewis' gates. We went on downtown and stopped at Dairyland and tried to decide what to do. We just sat there and looked at each other.

[illegible] wanted to go [illegible] road. Mary and [illegible] when we go to [illegible] gate they decided [illegible] around.

[illegible] big dead dog laying along the road. When we were almost [illegible] jumped and leaped over our car and went through the field on [illegible] road. We decided to go to the police then and went down and around [illegible] to them. Gary was outside the drive-in getting [illegible] to take [illegible] told [illegible] about seeing this [illegible] police.

After the police came we went back up the road in our car with Gary and the police about 1/2 mile behind us. I saw it then in a pasture field with its wings out a little walking towards the car then it went up in the air and came at the car. As Gary's car lights came over the rise in the road and the lights shined on it, it disappeared. We went up and down the road looking for it but didn't see anymore. We went back down to the Drive-In and got in Gary's car and went back up. We finally found Millard Halstead and got with him and went to the powerhouse building.

We sat there with our lights out for about 15 or 20 minutes when I heard that squeaking sound like a mouse only a lot stronger. A shadow went across the building over on the hill across from us. Mary and I saw the red eyes then and told Millard. He shined the lights right on them without being told where they were. We saw dust coming from the ground or somewhere as Millard moved the spotlight around. We finally left and came to the trailer.

[The Mallettes] were afraid to go to their apartment so we decided to stay together but we didn't go to bed. We just turned on all the lights and stayed up. Wednesday we went up again to the building and found these off tracks around the building. Steve was around the boilers by himself and suddenly he came running out white as a sheet yelling for someone. He said he saw it in the boiler.

That night it was seen at Thomas's so we went up there and Mary and I stayed in the house while Steve and Roger and a few others [bystanders] went looking for it. On the way up I saw it from the highway above the trees gliding back and forth. They searched the area around Thomas's house but didn't find anything. We started home around 12:30 and I saw it in one of the maintenance buildings. Mary and I started crying and Roger took off. I kept thinking about that thing following us again but it didn't.

We went to my mother's and I went all to pieces. Roger and my dad took me down to the hospital. I finally got back home and we all stayed together that night again but didn't go to bed till 3 or 4 o'clock. We were still afraid to go to sleep. The next day Thursday we went back up with reporters and we all heard a clanging noise from inside the building. Roger and Steve and the reporters went back in and found the boiler door open that Steve had shut when he left a few minutes before that. That night we went back up and Mary Hyre and I saw the eyes inside the fenced off place beside the powerhouse building.

On the way home I saw its eyes back in some trees from the road as the car went past and looked back and could see its form. That is the last time I have seen it. To me, it just looks like a man with wings. (It was a dirty grey color.) It has a body shape form with wings on its back that come around it. It has muscular legs like a man and fiery-red eyes that glow when the lights hit it. There was no glowing about it until the lights hit it. I couldn't see its head or arms. I don't know if the eyes are even in a head. When we came down the straight stretch by the armory it didn't even seem like it had any trouble keeping up with us. It must have had very powerful wings.

HYNES: It didn't actually start with the Mothman... It started with these strange sightings of giant birds. But it evolved quickly.

[redacted]: Strange flying objects.

HYNES: Yeah. Exactly. Strange flying objects. There were commonalities in the sightings. Weird details that caught in the public's imagination and spread through the local papers. Bright red eyes... Coming out of the thing's torso. Like it didn't have a proper head. And when it would fly, it usually wouldn't flap its wings. It would just raise into the air eerily and silently.

[redacted]: And what? You're telling me that you and Lee designed this creature?

HYNES: No... The people designed it. In their own way. I think... I think they all must have latched onto the same details, and then the news stories kept echoing those details, making it more defined in their heads.

[redacted]: Why do they call it Mothman? I've read the description. It doesn't sound like any moth I've seen.

HYNES: Well... It was a play on Batman. From the TV show and the comic books. It was a man-shaped thing with wings.

[redacted]: This Batman has wings?

HYNES: No sir. But people... They get caught on a fun idea. I think the papers like to try to get the name that sticks in the public's mind.

[redacted]: I see.

HYNES: Anyways... Once the details set, people kept seeing it out in the wild.

Beverly Baker, 68 y.o.
Key Traits: Bright red eyes,
sound of fluttering wings

Sighting: Arlee, WV

Seen by: Ronald Trent, 43 y.o.

Key Traits: Bright red eyes,
rose up without flapping its wings

HYNES: I think... I'm developing some of my own theories here, so I'm sorry if they're a little unwieldy. But I think in our line of work... strangeness begets strangeness.

[redacted]: Explain how you mean.

HYNES: I think people out there... They have a sense of how the world works, and they're all comfortable with that sense. But once they see something that breaks the rules as they understand them... It breaks ALL of the rules. Then, the expectation of strangeness creates MORE strangeness. Weird things happen when people expect weird things to happen. The world, it starts to distort. And when it distorts, I think it... I think it catches the attention of these... Well, these figures.

[redacted]: Figures.

HYNES: I don't have a catchy name for them. They're not like the Wild Fictions. They don't feel like they are just here because people expected them to be here. I don't know, this all makes me sound crazy.

[redacted]: I've become very generous in what I'm willing and able to believe, Doc, but I need to you spell this out for me.

HYNES: So, I think... I think there are things like UFOs. And Mothman. And Dragons, the myths of old... They are more of an expression of people, you know? They don't have intent. They just have the intent that people want them to have.

[redacted]: Wild Fictions.

HYNES: Exactly. That's what I've been calling them. But then there are these strange figures, and they DO have intent.

[redacted]: Did Lee tell you about what he saw in Dallas back in 1963?

HYNES: He told me about [redacted]

[redacted]: And do you suspect that SHE is one of these figures with intent?

HYNES: Based on what I've heard... I do. But she isn't the one I was talking about.

[redacted]: You're talking about Indrid Cold.

HYNES: Yes. Indrid Cold.

"INDRID COLD"
Derenberger Sighting
Summary of Direct Account
Mineral Wells, WV
November 1966

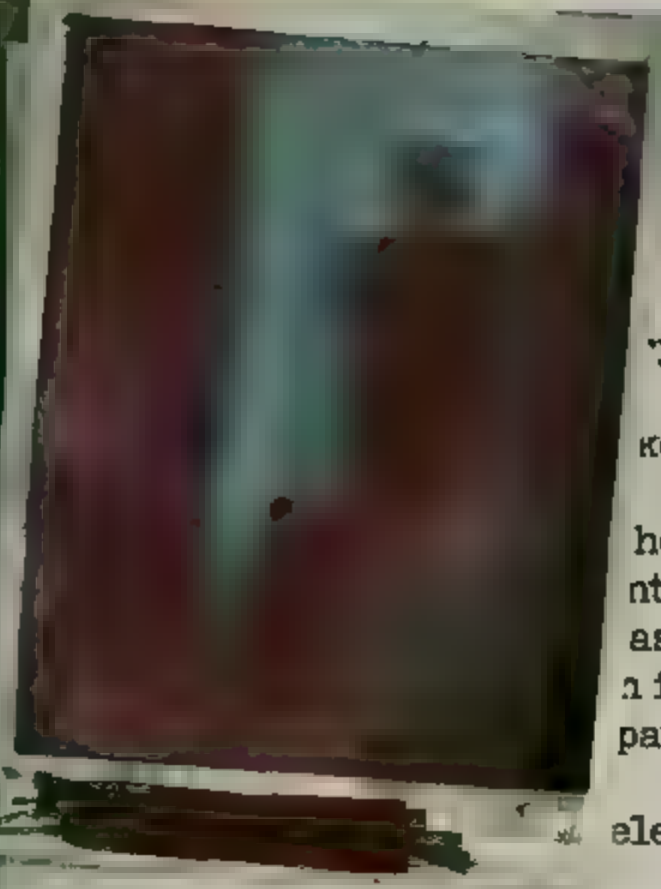
While driving his truck on Interstate 7, Woodrow "Woody" Derenberger noticed a strange vehicle following him that he presumed to be a police car. It was 7 p.m., on a rainy day. He was startled when the vehicle moved in front of his truck, at which point he noticed it was shaped like a kerosene lamp chimney and floating in the air. The vehicle blocked the road and a door opened in its side.

A man exited the ship. He wore a dark topcoat over what appeared to be a strange green, metallic garment that shimmered in the light of Derenberger's car. His skin was tan, his hair slicked back, and his smile wide. As he moved away from the ship, it rose fifty feet in the air above the road.

Derenberger did not hear the man but could feel the man's intent in his mind. He wanted Derenberger to roll down his window. The strange smiling man communicated directly with Derenberger's mind. He informed Derenberger that he meant him no harm. That he came from a country much less powerful than his. He informed Derenberger that his name was Cold. That he slept, breathed, and bled just as Derenberger did.

Cold inquired about the nearby city of Parkersburg. Derenberger did his best to explain the idea of a city to Cold. Cold informed Derenberger that on his world, these places were called "Gatherings." Cold told Derenberger to report the encounter to the authorities, and that he would confirm the report to the authorities at a later date. He then told Derenberger he would see him again soon.

The vehicle lowered into the road, allowing Cold to enter, and then it rose quickly and quietly until it disappeared out of sight.



scares you, doesn't he?

y much so.

ke to know why.

he Department... After I was interviewed
nt that first time in the diner by my
as visited by this figure. This...
n in Black. And it warned me with these
pathic visions.

elepathic.

HYNES: It spoke directly into my brain. It showed me pictures. The only way I could make it stop was by putting on the tin foil. But there was something to him... There was intent.

[redacted]: Do you think the figure you spoke with could be this Indrid Cold?

HYNES: (unintelligible)

[redacted]: Speak up, son.

HYNES: Yes. I do think it could have been Indrid Cold. Or... I don't know. I think they could all be connected somehow. Maybe all the Men in Black are connected to him somehow.

[redacted]: You don't think this Derenberger could have made it all up?

HYNES: I... No I don't. We'll get to why, that all happened at the end, but I don't think he did. And either way, after that encounter, reports of strange men in black suits started spreading.

[redacted]: That's when you informed the home office of what you and Lee had been doing. How you had defied orders to run this operation. How you had misappropriated Department of Truth resources.

HYNES: Yes, sir. I was scared. I felt that strangeness begets strangeness, and it was all getting stranger. Lee was furious with me, but I knew things were getting out of hand. A few notable ufologists were starting to poke around. Gray Barker and John Keel. I could see where it was all heading.

[redacted]: And then you tried to scare some people off, didn't you?

HYNES: I... Yes. We did. Or rather, I did. We thought Lee was too much of a risk. It's honestly kind of funny...

[redacted]: Funny?

HYNES: Well... Lee made me take off my tin foil before I went to this meeting of people in Point Pleasant who had seen UFOs. I was supposed to act like a kid ufologist, because in a lot of ways, that's still exactly what I was. But taking off the tin foil had me so anxious that I must have come across very strange. I was trying to convince people not to talk to Keel or Barker, to keep everything contained. A few months later there were stories about the young Man in Black, acting bizarrely at the party, asking strange questions.

[redacted]: You became one of your own Men in Black.

HYNES: Yes. And it just... Well, it just made everything worse. The panic was dialing up and up, and the less funny part is the implication of what happens when the public notices us in some ways. The idea that there are mysterious men in dark suits who know more about the UFOs and the Mothmen. It's one thing when they are telling stories about these Wild Fictions, but it's another thing when they are telling stories about us. When they have truth on their side, it feels like what they believe about us could have a measurable effect on who we are and what we do. So I was getting more and more nervous, and Lee was getting more and more desperate. He wanted to capture the UFO he had set out to capture. He didn't want to stop all of the stories spreading in the press. He wanted to lean into Point Pleasant and see if we could really drive it to manifest there. And it did.

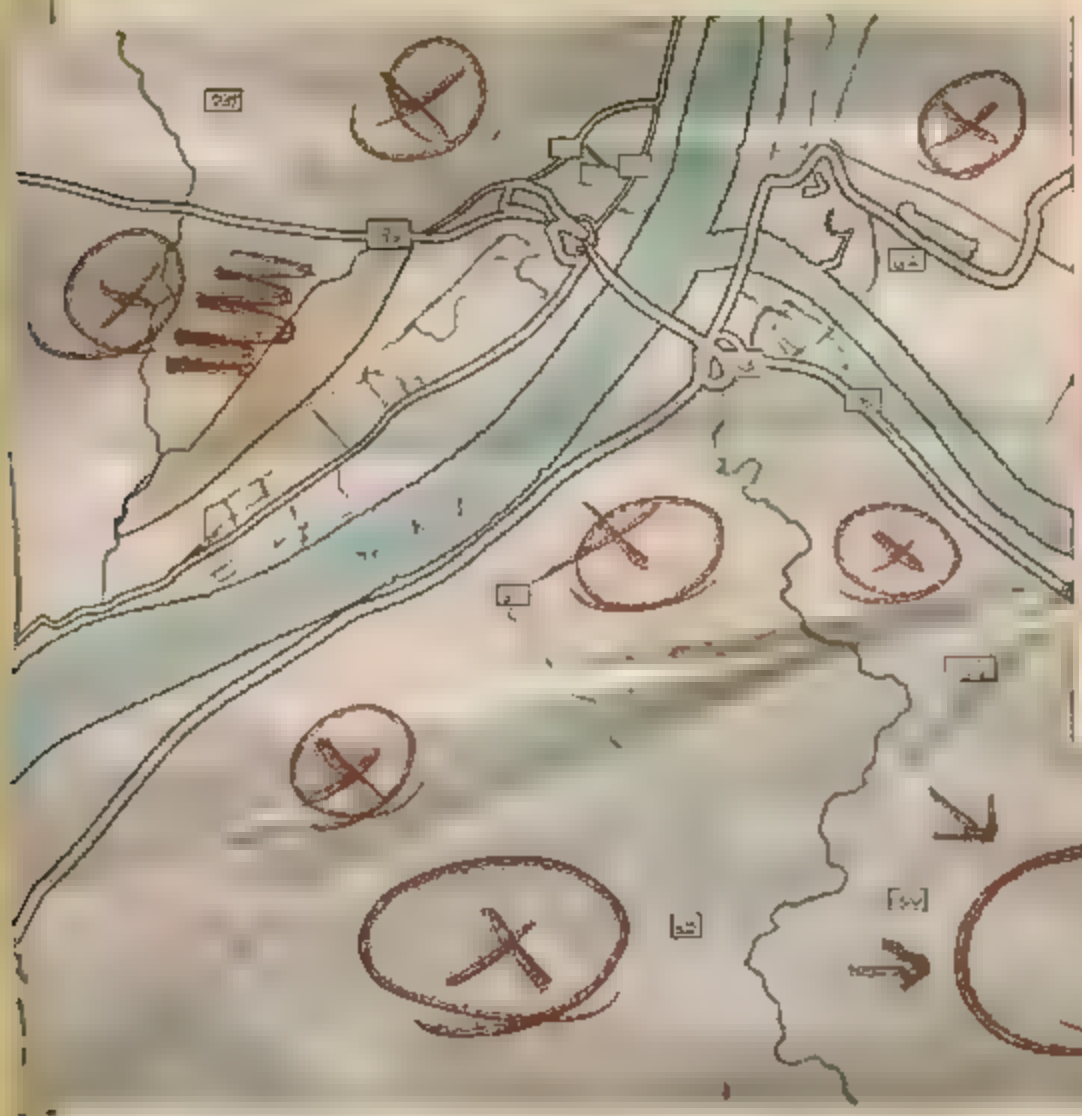
HYNES: The Silver Bridge ran across the Ohio River. It was about 5 p.m. when drivers saw something bright in the sky overhead. And then the bridge began to collapse. There were 32 vehicles that sank into the river that day. 40 people died.

[redacted]: And you think the UFO did it?

HYNES: I think enough people began to believe that all of these sightings were a message of some kind. An omen of something terrible that might happen on the horizon. And that belief, spread and focused, made something happen. I told Lee that I wanted to stop. But he had another idea. He had called in a ranger from out west. They'd been tracking the Mothman, and he had sprung a trap for it. He wanted to get SOMETHING.

[redacted]: And that upset you.

HYNES: It upset me that the bridge didn't seem to bother him at all. That all of those dead... They didn't shake his focus at all. If anything, I think it made him feel like he was more right. Like the bridge somehow proved that all of this was worth it. And he wanted his trophy. At this point I just wanted to get it all over with, so I followed him into the woods.



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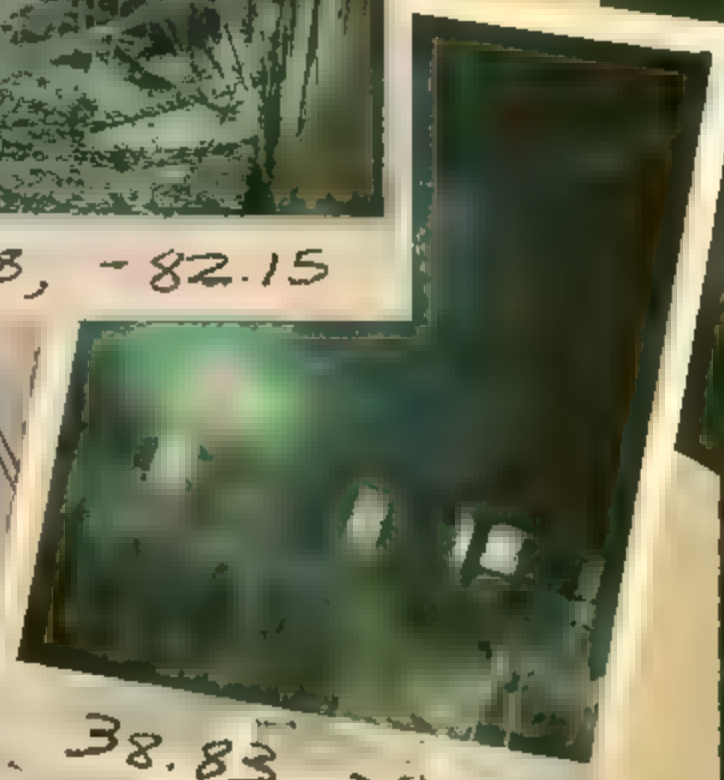

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[redacted]: And that's when you saw it?

HYNES: The smell was awful. Beyond awful. It was this strange thing in our sights and the sight and smell of it just made my head ache. I think my foil hat worked against me there.

[redacted]: In what way?

HYNES: We were staring at an impossible creature that hadn't existed longer than a year. Something totally fictional. Entirely invented. That means it's not quite real. That it's still, in some very real ways, made out of imagination. A kind of... Psychic impression on reality. But there was a part of it that was living and breathing because people believed it was real. I think that's why the elephant tranquilizers worked. People believing it was real meant that on some level it followed the rules of other living things.

[redacted]: The Field Office was very excited to learn that the tranquilizers worked. They've been dissecting these bigfoot things out west for a decade.

HYNES: I'm glad our work wasn't a total loss.

[redacted]: Son, I know you're spooked, but we've never taken a thing like this alive. I don't know anybody that has. Particularly one of these... Fictions. The Soviets haven't done this. The Nazis tried, but they never succeeded. I don't want to encourage behavior like this behind my back, but we haven't had the stomach to look the strangest things in the face. And it's a limit to us, a limit we need to move beyond.

HYNES: Thank you, sir.

[redacted]: But what happened next. This is the part I don't quite grasp. I need you to help me with it. This is why you're afraid, isn't it?

HYNES: Yes, sir.

[redacted]: You had your own encounter with this Indrid Cold?

HYNES: It started with the ship landing in the clearing. Lee was shouting, cheerful. He thought maybe we could bag a UFO and a Mothman all at once. But then the door opened and Cold walked out. And Lee went silent, and white as a sheet.

[redacted]: He said something? Was it this... Telepathy? Could you hear what was said?

HYNES: I didn't... I just... I just bore witness to it all. The Mothman had made me feel sick, but Cold's arrival was like a knife directly in my brain. But he wasn't talking to me. He wasn't interested in me. He wanted LEE.

HYNES: It only lasted a few minutes, but Lee... He looked terrified. He looked like something had shaken him to his core. I tried to get him to talk about it, but he refused. And that just scared me more.

[redacted]: What do you think that this Cold fellow... This strange alien man... What would he have to say to Lee?

HYNES: That's the question, isn't it? I mean, part of it could just be intent. If this Cold person, if he understands in some metaphysical way how the world really works, then maybe he could see that it was Lee's idea that had set all this in motion, ending with us standing over the unconscious Mothman. Maybe he's just an observer, and he told Lee what he observed.

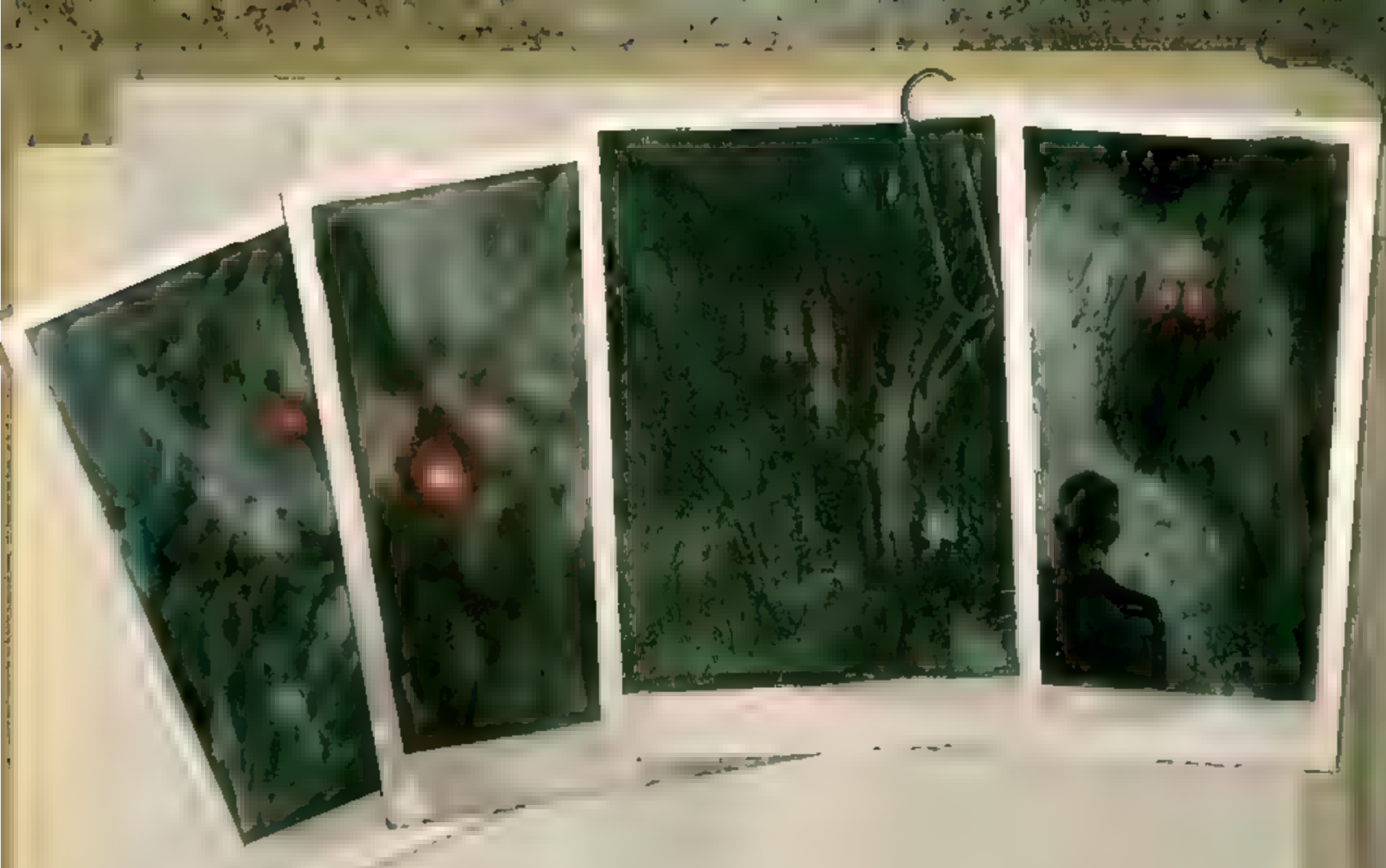
[redacted]: But that's not what scares you.

HYNES: No, sir. It's not.

[redacted]: Explain yourself.

HYNES: Before I do... I just want it on the record that I don't want to do any more field work. I'd rather stay in the archives. I think I'm more comfortable with the theory of it all instead of the practice. I want to understand what our impact on the world is.

[redacted]: You know, I tried to get Lee to grapple with that same question. But you seem like you might actually be up to the task. I'll grant your wish, if you tell me why you're scared.



HYNES: I think... I think there's something WRONG with Lee. There was a way he was looking at the Mothman all the way back to Washington. And when we set it up in the basement, he sat alone with it for hours. And I had this thought. This dark thought.

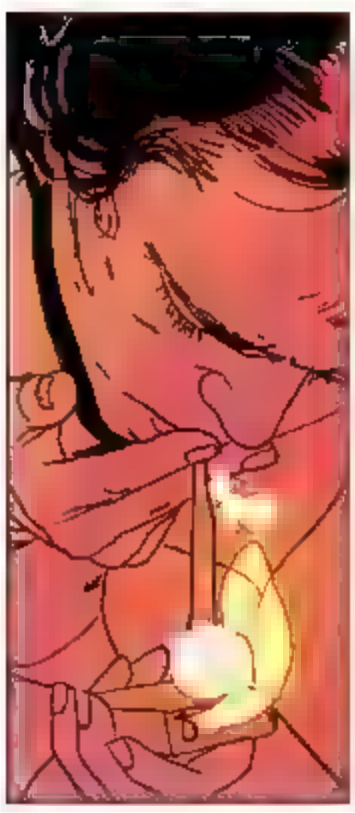
[redacted]: What was it?

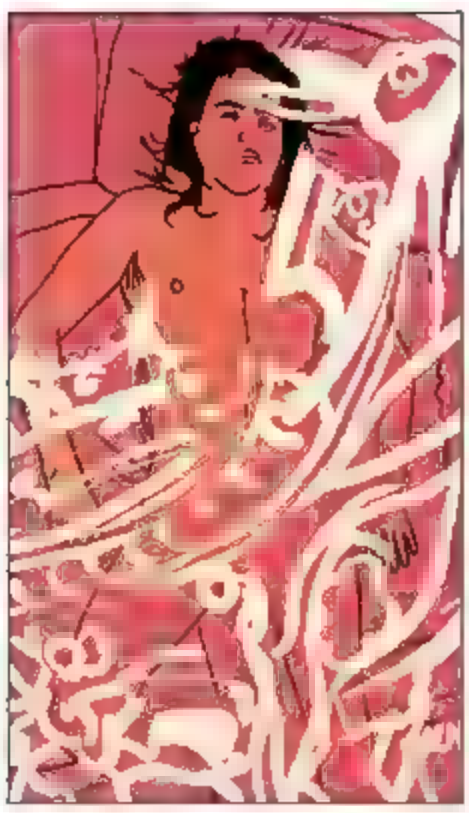
HYNES: I was thinking that I was looking at two of the strangest monsters of the decade. Two American Monsters, just alike each other. Things made of secrets that the world just speculates on, to try and make sense of their little lives. The thought was that the two of them were more the same than different.

[redacted]: And that's the last time you saw Lee Harvey Oswald? Before his disappearance?

HYNES: Yes sir. I haven't seen him since.

DEVIATION 5





Are you scared?

Yeah.

What are you running from?

I guess I'm running from *myself.*

Why?

Fuck, why does *anybody* run from themselves?

I'm scared of who I am. *Really.* I'm scared of what that means.

What *does* it mean?

I'm scared... that I'm not *real.*

What *is* real?

You're stoned.

Aren't *you*?

Hah. Fuck.

They're looking for me. Right now they're looking for me. I'm too dangerous to be in the wind. If the wrong person took a photograph...

Are you married?

I *was*.

I wasn't any good at it.

Have you ever met *anybody* good at it?

Yeah, of course. Some people make it work ***easy***. They've got a nice show they put on for the public, and they have...

You can tell they have something extra. They're taking little notes in their mind to tell each other later in private. They're excited...

Marina...I wasn't good to her.

I was chasing something ***bigger***. I thought she was standing in my way. I didn't really consider if what I was chasing was worth catching...

And then when I had it in my hands...

DO YOU SEE? IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEE

Fuck. What time is it?

Four.

In what? The morning? Afternoon?

Does it matter?

I guess... I guess not.

Why are you so afraid?

Who wouldn't be? Who wouldn't be afraid of not being real?

I'm talking about memories, and I don't know if they belong to me.

I'm talking like I'm not some fucking... bogeyman. Jesus.

Bogeyman Jesus. Right on.

Hah.

Something scared you, didn't it?

Yeah. Something scared me.

I was in West Virginia...

And *Indrid Cold*... this man who wasn't *real*. He spoke to me in my *mind*.

He said...that I was a dream this country is having. That I *belong* to them, just like *he* belongs to them.

He said that I needed to walk softly, or the world would break in half.

And so I ran away.

I ran away to the place that everybody is running away to these days.

Somewhere that doesn't exist. A dream of a country that's impossible, that's never going to grow or spread.

A fictional man in a fictional America.

You don't believe in *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out*?

I don't think I get to believe in ***anything***. I think...that's my curse. I just see what everybody else believes.

I belong to ***them***.

But I can see where all of this goes. All the drugs. All the peace and love.

This isn't enlightenment. This is ***lotus-eating***.

It's indulgence. It's...putting yourself at the center of the universe. Like you're the only one that exists, like you're the only one whose needs and wants are ***real***.

It's people wanting to get high and get fucked and wash their hands of responsibility.

It's beautiful right now for a moment, but it's going to turn sour.

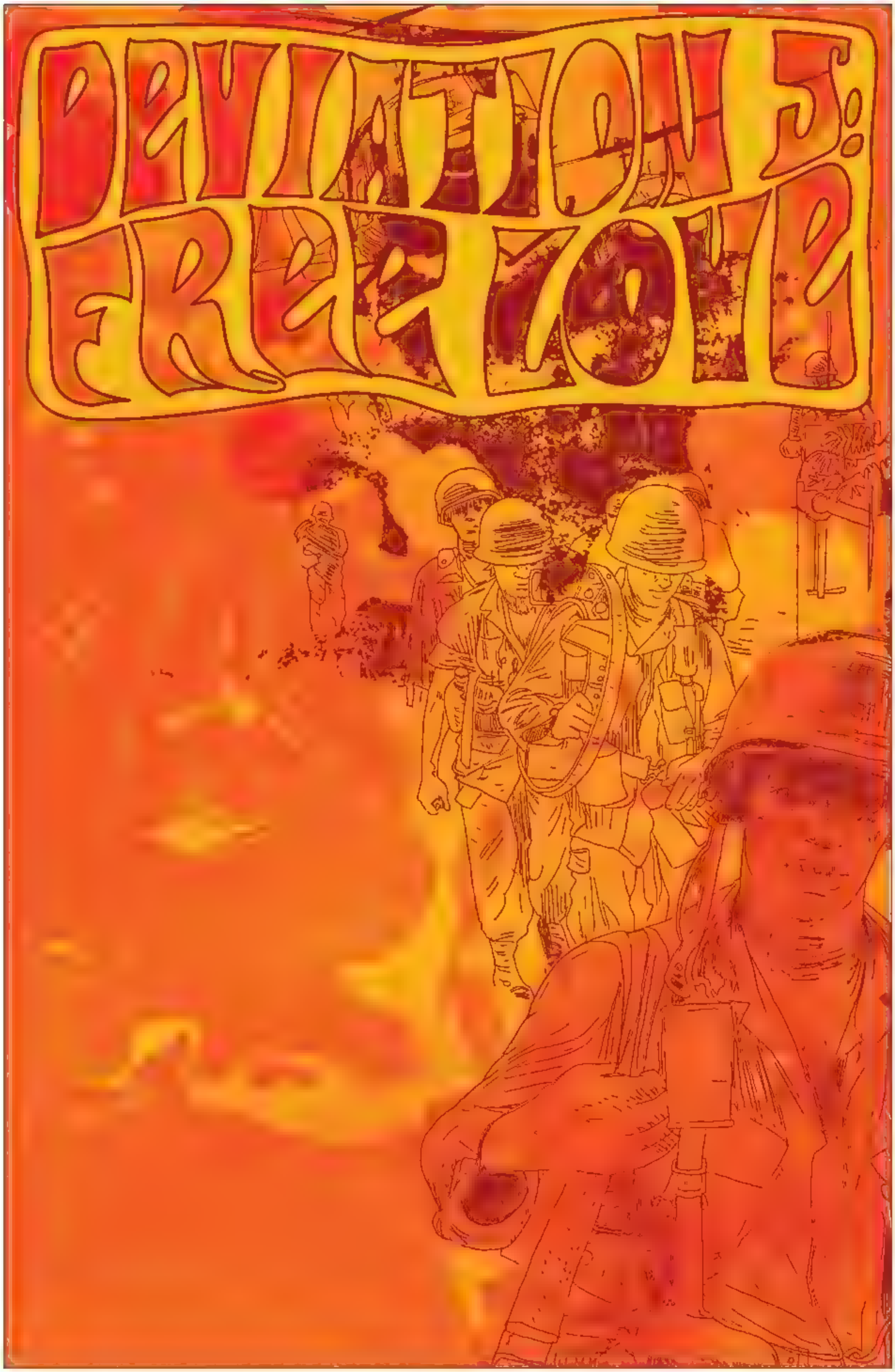
Doesn't everything?

Sure.

Just like *this*.

Who the *hell* are you, and who do you *work for*?

DEVIATION 5: ERA ZONE



Do you know who I am?

It doesn't sound like *you* know who you are.

Look, I don't want to hurt you.

I know. You're not going to hurt me. I'm just a pawn in a bigger game.

A patsy.

You *do* know.

Have you been plugged in the last few days?

The primary? I don't give a *shit* about the primary.

So, you don't know.

What are you trying to say?

Turn on the radio, Lee.

...Last night, Robert F. Kennedy was shot in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, after winning the California and South Dakota primaries...

I can't...no. That can't be right...

...political dissident, Sirhan Sirhan...

BANG BANG BANG

You're not the only patsy out there anymore, Lee.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

Your mind is opening up. Your pupils are the size of dinner plates. Mine too.

Fuck, you're *Company*...

...some CIA honeypot bitch...

That's not nice.

Was it you? Did you pull the trigger? Did you kill Kennedy?

Did *you*?

So many people making waves. Trying to change how this country looks at itself. Upsetting the balance. JFK. Malcolm X. MLK. RFK.

Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang.

And those Black Panther boys, they've got to be shaking in their little red hats. They tried to rock the boat too hard. They let the water in.

You drugged me. Some **LSD** bullshit...

You drugged *yourself*. Just like the rest of the country. Your mind is opening up. You have to let it. Open all the way. Let the sunshine in.

Fuck...

Lotus-eating. I like that, Lee. I really like that.

Everyone always misses the real conspiracy, don't they? We're the little shadow puppets they control. We do what they *tell* us to do.

That's *bullshit*.

Some very smart, very dumb people thought they could control what America was without getting their hands covered in blood.

They thought they were storytellers. They thought they were selling *Coca Cola* and *Chevrolet* and *hot dogs.*

They wanted to tell America that *"It's a Wonderful Life,"* and they wanted America to believe it. Isn't that right, Lee?

But it's ***not*** a wonderful life. People ***know*** that. People don't want to ***get along.*** They want to ***fuck*** and ***feel good*** and feel ***righteous.***

The Department of Truth is selling America its own version of *The Truth.* Telling everyone *Why We Fight. Why We Buy. Why We Believe.*

But it's not ***working,*** is it? You ***know*** it's not working. You see the cracks forming all around us. You see the ***fracturing.***

The *Counterculture...* It's such a perfect little weapon. These kids think they're fighting against some big war in Asia, but ***they're on*** the front lines right here in Haight-Ashbury.

They eat the lotus flower and they see themselves as little gods, and see their desires as something larger than they are.

They sing their little protest songs, but they'll be voting Republican before their first grays come in.

You're some... Republican plant?

I'm just a pawn. A ***patsy.*** I feed the kids the drugs and my bosses tell me it's to wash their minds, see if we can push them, control who they are and what they think.

It's not working... This whole MKULTRA thing...

Not how the men in suits want it to work, but me and the kids on the ground, we've been seeing it...

They do it all on their own. They brainwash themselves. They become rancid, and bloodthirsty, and we have to feed them the blood they want.

I don't understand... Who killed Kennedy?

You're so fucked up you can't even see how funny that is...

Is it my bosses in *Langley?* Eisenhower's *military-industrial complex?* The big bad commie-hating war machine, not willing to back down in the fight against the hammer and sickle, even if they have to kill our best and brightest?

Is it Queen *J. Edgar Hoover* and his black-suited goon squad in the FBI, terrified that the kids are going to rise up and shoot their parents in their sleep?

Is it the *Italian mob,* and *Hoffa,* and all their mobsters and teamsters angry that they're losing their foothold?

It's the same as it was in '63. It wasn't any of them. It was *you.* It was *me.* It was all those kids *smoking reefer* on the street and *thinking about free love.*

You can't just tell them that things are going to be better forever like your idiot bosses thought. The kids want to fight for themselves. They want to *own* it for themselves.

You need to let them *taste glory.*

Are you going to kill me, too?

No.

Come here.

I wasn't even supposed to *talk* to you. I was just supposed to watch. The other intelligence bosses, they don't *like* your boss.

They don't like the weird shit you tried in West Virginia. They don't like that you're just walking around. They'd rather you be dead.

But they don't want to kill *you*. They want to kill your *Department*.

Are you going to tell them what I said...about not being *real*? About being some kind of...I don't know...

Some kind of *walking idea*.

What the *fuck* do you even think *America* is? You think it had the name carved into the fucking bedrock?

Nothing about this fucking place is *real*.

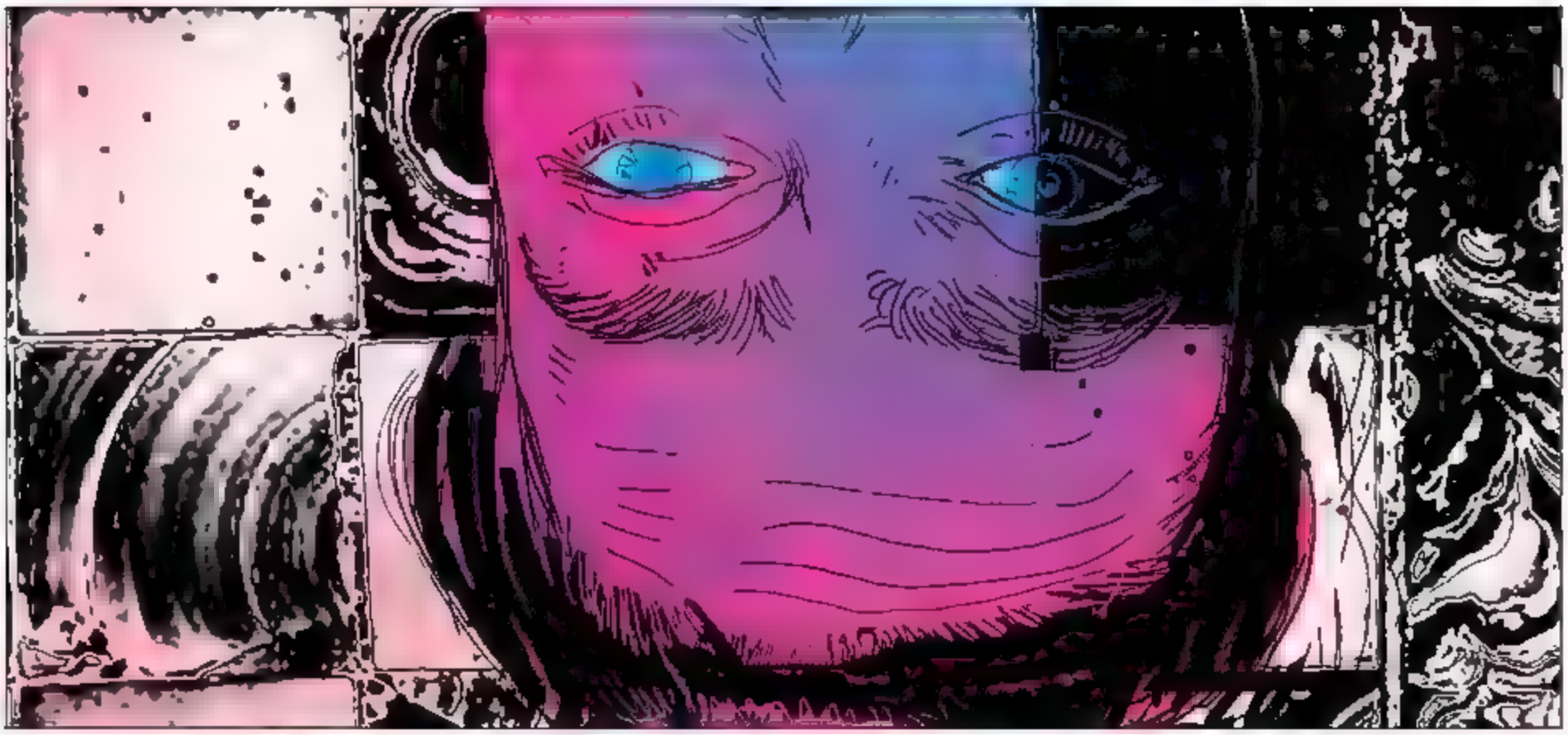
It's all just *people*.

How *real* something is doesn't change the impact it has on the world. How people feel changes the world.

Umm... *oh, **fuck**...*

You want to feel *real*? Then fucking *do* something that makes you feel real.

*Ummmmm



1968

Feed Your Head

DEVIATION 6 /

IT'S STRANGE BEING IN THIS ROOM.

WE ARE STRANGE MEN, LIVING STRANGE LIVES, LEE.

YEAH.

THIS PROPOSAL OF YOURS...IT'S EXTREME.

I THINK THE NEW GUY *LIKES* EXTREME.

I SUPPOSE WE'LL SEE.

CONGRATULATIONS, MR. PRESIDENT.

MR. CAPRA.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT PAT AND I ALWAYS LOVED *MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON.*

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT. YOU ARE TOO KIND.

THEY TELL ME YOU HAVE SOME SECRET DEPARTMENT IN THE BASEMENT OF THE GODDAMN ***LIBRARY.***

YES.

AND THAT THIS DEPARTMENT OF YOURS, THIS ***PROPAGANDA AGENCY...*** THEY TEL.. ME THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST CRUCIAL MEETINGS THAT I'LL TAKE IN MY FIRST DAYS HERE IN OFFICE.

I'M AFRAID SO, SIR.

DO WE NEED *HIM?* DO WE TRUST HIM?

HE LOOKS FAMILIAR TO ME. BUT I CAN'T PLACE HIM.

THAT'S PROBABLY FOR THE BEST, MR. PRESIDENT.

SO, FRANK, TELL ME. WHAT THE HELL *IS* THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH?

I SUSPECT YOU KNEW SOMETHING OF IT WHEN YOU WERE WORKING UNDER EISENHOWER. I KNOW THERE WERE RUMORS...

HOW ABOUT YOU TELL IT TO ME LIKE I DON'T KNOW A DAMN THING.

YES, MR. PRESIDENT.

MAY 2ND, 1945. 9:00 A.M.

SOVIET TROOPS RAID THE FUHRERBUNKER IN BERLIN.

ADOLF HITLER AND EVA BRAUN'S BODIES ARE FOUND BURNED.

AN AMERICAN OSS AGENT, EMBEDDED WITH THE RED ARMY, DISCOVERS A SECRET LIBRARY IN THE BUNKER, PARTIALLY BURNED.

THE LIBRARY CONTAINS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS GOING BACK TO THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM A.D.

THE DOCUMENTS CONFIRM THE RUMOR THAT THE NAZI HIGH COMMAND BELIEVES THAT THE WORLD IS MALLEABLE GIVEN STRONG BELIEF.

THAT, IF ENOUGH PEOPLE BELIEVE SOMETHING IS TRUE, THEN IT BECOMES TRUE. THE WORLD REWRITES ITSELF GIVEN THAT BELIEF.

THE DOCUMENTS ALSO CONFIRM THAT MANY GREAT EMPIRES OF THE WORLD HAVE GRAPPLED WITH THIS.

THE ROMANS KNEW. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH KNEW. THE BRITISH KNEW.

CLICK!

THE BRITISH WERE FIGHTING TOOTH AND NAIL TO MAKE SURE OUR MEN AND THE SOVIETS DIDN'T READ THOSE DOCUMENTS.

BLAM

WE WERE ABLE TO GET MOST OF THEM BACK TO WASHINGTON FOR STUDY.

TRUMAN CONVENED A SECRET BOARD OF ADVISORS. I WAS ON IT.

I BELIEVED THE DOCUMENTS I READ, THOUGH THERE WERE MANY THAT CONFUSED AND FRIGHTENED ME.

IT WAS MY OPINION THAT WE NEEDED TO REINFORCE OUR NEWFOUND MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH WITH A STORY OF AMERICA THAT WE COULD GET THE POPULATION TO BELIEVE IN WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS.

REIMAGINE THE COUNTRY INTO WHAT IT SHOULD BE. BOLSTER OURSELVES WITH THAT IMAGE, MAKE THE WHOLE WORLD BELIEVE OUR VISION OF OURSELVES.

AND DO IT BEFORE ANOTHER VISION MIGHT TAKE HOLD.

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH

UNITED STATES OF

THE SOVIETS.

YES.

THEY'VE GOT THEIR *OWN* DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

YES, THEY DO. AND THEY ARE VERY GOOD. WE HAD EYES IN THEIR DEPARTMENT VERY EARLY ON. LEE HERE CAN SPEAK TO THAT.

LEE.

YES SIR. I WAS RECRUITED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH IN 1959. STRAIGHT OUT OF THE MARINE CORPS.

I SPENT TWO YEARS EMBEDDED IN THE SOVIET COUNTER-PART OF OUR DEPARTMENT.

THEIR HEAD OF OPERATIONS, DZIGA VERTOV, HAD A BIT OF A SENSE OF HUMOR.

HE HAD CALLED HIS FILMS *KINO PRAVDA*...FILM TRUTH...BUT HIS MINISTRY WOULD TAKE ANOTHER NAME, MOCKING OUR ORGANIZATION.

THE *KOMITET NEPRAVDY*.

THE *MINISTRY OF LIES*.

THERE ARE TWO CONFLICTING STORIES IN THE WORLD TODAY, MR. PRESIDENT. DIVERGENT STORIES ABOUT WHAT THE WORLD IS, AND WHAT IT IS DESTINED TO BECOME.

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH IS WRITING ONE OF THE STORIES. THE SOVIET MINISTRY OF LIES IS WRITING THE OTHER.

THE TWO STORIES CANNOT CO-EXIST. AT SOME POINT, WE WILL HIT A TIPPING POINT AND ONE OF THE TWO STORIES WILL BECOME HISTORY.

AT THAT MOMENT, IT WOULD NOT JUST BECOME HISTORY MOVING FORWARD--IT WOULD RESHAPE OUR HISTORY BACKWARDS THROUGH THE END OF THE WAR. POSSIBLY BACKWARDS TO OUR FOUNDING.

WE WOULD ***BECOME*** THE FAILED CAPITALIST DYSTOPIA THAT THEIR PROPAGANDA PURPORTS US TO BE. RETROACTIVELY, THAT IS ALL WE WOULD HAVE EVER BEEN.

THAT'S CHILLING.

YES. I TH NK SO, TOO.

THIS ALL STRETCHES CREDULITY. IT'S ALL TOO HYPOTHETICAL. HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE VICTORS. SURE, I CAN GRASP THAT...BUT THIS IS MORE THAN THAT.

YEAH, IT IS.

SIR, MY ASSOCIATE HAS DEVELOPED A PLAN ON A RECENT...SABBATICAL OF HIS. HE BELIEVES THAT THIS PLAN WILL HELP US REASSERT OUR STORY, AND MAY INTRODUCE A NEW TACTIC AT OUR DISPOSAL.

THE KID REALLY DOES LOOK FAMILIAR TO ME.

PEOPLE SAY THAT OFTEN, SIR.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

TWENTY-NINE YEARS OLD, SIR.

YOU REALLY *ARE* STILL JUST A KID.

YES, SIR.

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF THESE MEETINGS OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. AT ONE OF THEM, YOU'RE GOING TO LEARN THAT THE APOLLO 11 MISSION IS LIKELY TO FAIL.

AND WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE WE DO ABOUT IT?

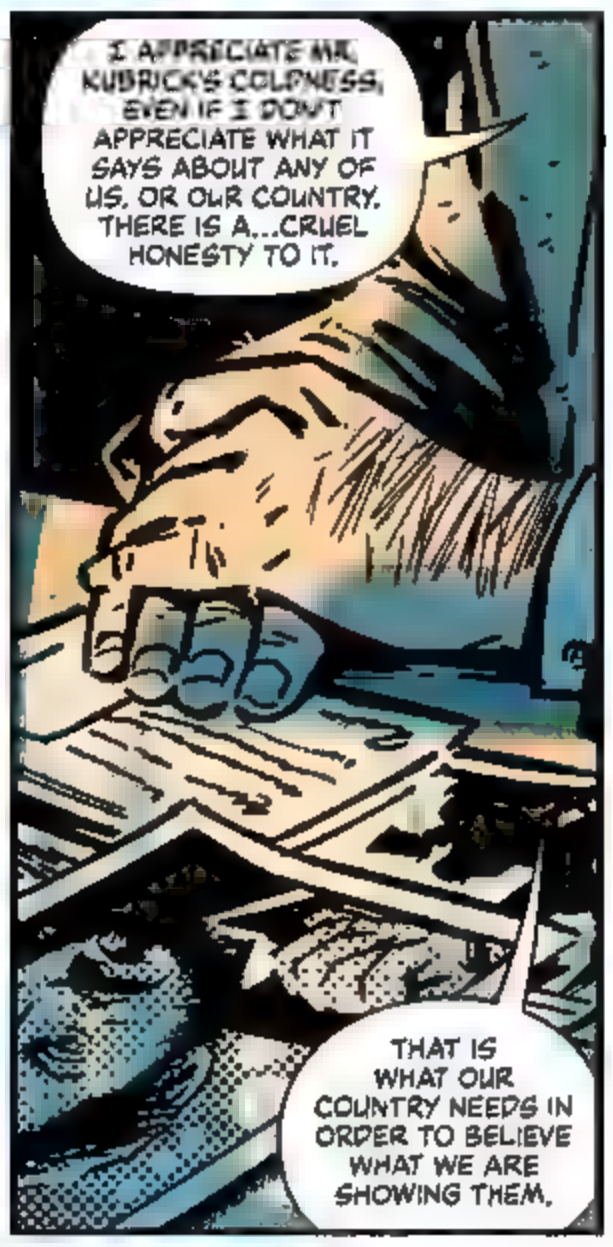
I PROPOSE WE TELL A *DIFFERENT* STORY.

IT WOULD BE EAS ER TO HAVE YOU DO IT.
Feh. MY FILMS WERE MORALITY PLAYS ON SOUND-STAGES.

I WAS NEVER A REALIST, AND I NEVER SOUGHT TO BE. THE REAL WORLD IS ALL QUITE A BIT COLDER THAN BEDFORD FALLS.

YOU SAW HIS SPACE MOVIE 2001?

SURE.


I APPRECIATE MR. KUBRICK'S COLDNESS, EVEN IF I DON'T APPRECIATE WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT ANY OF US, OR OUR COUNTRY. THERE IS A...CRUEL HONESTY TO IT.
THAT IS WHAT OUR COUNTRY NEEDS IN ORDER TO BELIEVE WHAT WE ARE SHOWING THEM.

YOU'RE STILL AGAINST THIS.

I'M NOT *AGAINST* IT, I'M *FRIGHTENED* BY IT.

THE IDEA THAT WE COULD JUST... BYPASS THE HARD WORK, AND STILL REAP THE BENEFITS. IT DOES NOT FEEL IN LINE WITH THE AMERICAN SPIRIT.

I WANT TO LIVE IN THEM, TOO, BOSS. THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

BUT I SUPPOSE I'M AN OLD MAN NOW, LEE. I BELIEVE IN MY LITTLE FAIRYTALES. I BELIEVE IN THE BOY RANGERS, AND THE OLD SAVINGS AND LOAN. I WROTE FICTIONS AND WANT TO LIVE IN THEM.

SO, HOW WILL IT WORK?

I'D NEVER SAY THIS TO THE PRESIDENT, BUT I'VE BEEN READING MORE OF THIS MAGIC STUFF. CROWLEY AND ALL. OF THAT. I TH NK THERE ARE SOME... I DON'T KNOW...BEST PRACTICES WE CAN TAKE FROM IT.

WE'VE BEEN USING A KIND OF AMERICAN SYMBOLOGY. WE NEED TO LEAN INTO IT. WE WANT THE WORDS SPOKEN TO ECHO THE RIGHT POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE. EAGLES. STARS. STRIPES.

APOLLO 11

WE NEED A PICTURE OF US PLANTING THE AMERICAN FLAG ON THE MOON, AND THAT PICTURE NEEDS TO FEEL SO CLEAR AND SO REAL THAT THE WHOLE WORLD BELIEVES IN IT.

AND IF THEY DO?

THEN WHAT STARTS AS A LIE WILL STOP BEING A LIE. THERE ***WILL*** BE A MAN ON THE MOON. APOLLO 11 WILL HAVE GOTTEN US THERE. ALL THE MATH THEY COULDN'T CRACK WILL HAVE BEEN RETROACTIVELY CRACKED.

THE ***LIE*** WILL BECOME THE ***TRUTH.*** FULLY.

WE'LL BE THE ONLY ONES WHO REMEMBER IT EVER WAS ANOTHER WAY.

KUBRICK... HE'LL HAVE SOME KIND OF NIGHTMARE THAT WILL LINGER WITH HIM. WE'LL NEED TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

AND IF HE CROSSES THAT LINE, WE'LL NEED TO KILL HIM.

YES. OF COURSE. THAT'S HOW ALL OF THIS WORKS.

AND ON A FIRMAMENT OF LIES, WE'LL BUILD THE REST OF OUR CENTURY. HOW UGLY WILL WE HAVE TO GET TO MAKE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN A FINER WORLD?

WHAT STRANGE MONSTERS WE'VE BECOME, LEE. I WORRY...

I WORRY THAT KENNEDY WAS RIGHT.

WE SPENT TWO DECADES TRYING TO CRAFT A STORY ABOUT A PERFECT AMERICA, BUT WE COULDN'T MAKE IT STICK.

IT STARTED COMING APART IN OUR HANDS, AND WE BLAMED THE WRONG PEOPLE.

IN THE END, IT WASN'T US WHO PU...ED THE TRIGGER.

WE PUT THE GUN IN THE WINDOW. WE AS GOOD AS DID THE JOB OURSELVES. AND WHAT ANSWERS DO WE HAVE? I PUT YOU IN THE ARCHIVES TO TRY TO SOLVE A RIDDLE...

WHO IS THIS...FICTIONAL WOMAN? WHY DID SHE PULL THE TRIGGER? WHY IS SHE THERE EVERY TIME THE WORLD CHANGES? WHY TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE...

INSTEAD, YOU FOUND B GGER, STRANGER QUESTIONS. AND A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS THAT SHAKES ME DOWN TO MY VERY CORE.

MAYBE THE CATHOLICS WERE RIGHT. MAYBE SHE IS THE DEVIL. A PRINCESS OF LIES, PULLING US ALL TOWARD DAMNATION AND SORROW.

THIS IS ALL A BIT GRIM.

DIRECTOR CAPRA... I HAVE THE FILES YOU WANTED ON THE LATEST UFO FLAP...

OH, *uh*...

SORRY. I'LL COME BACK.

CLANK!

THAT BOY, HYNES... HE'S SO DAMN AFRAID OF YOU NOW. HE THINKS YOU'RE LIKE THE FICTIONAL WOMAN, OR THE MOTHMAN, OR ONE OF HIS UFOS...

HE'S A SWEET KID WITH A BIG IMAGINATION. HE'LL COME BACK AROUND.

IS THERE ANYTHING *TO* IT, LEE?

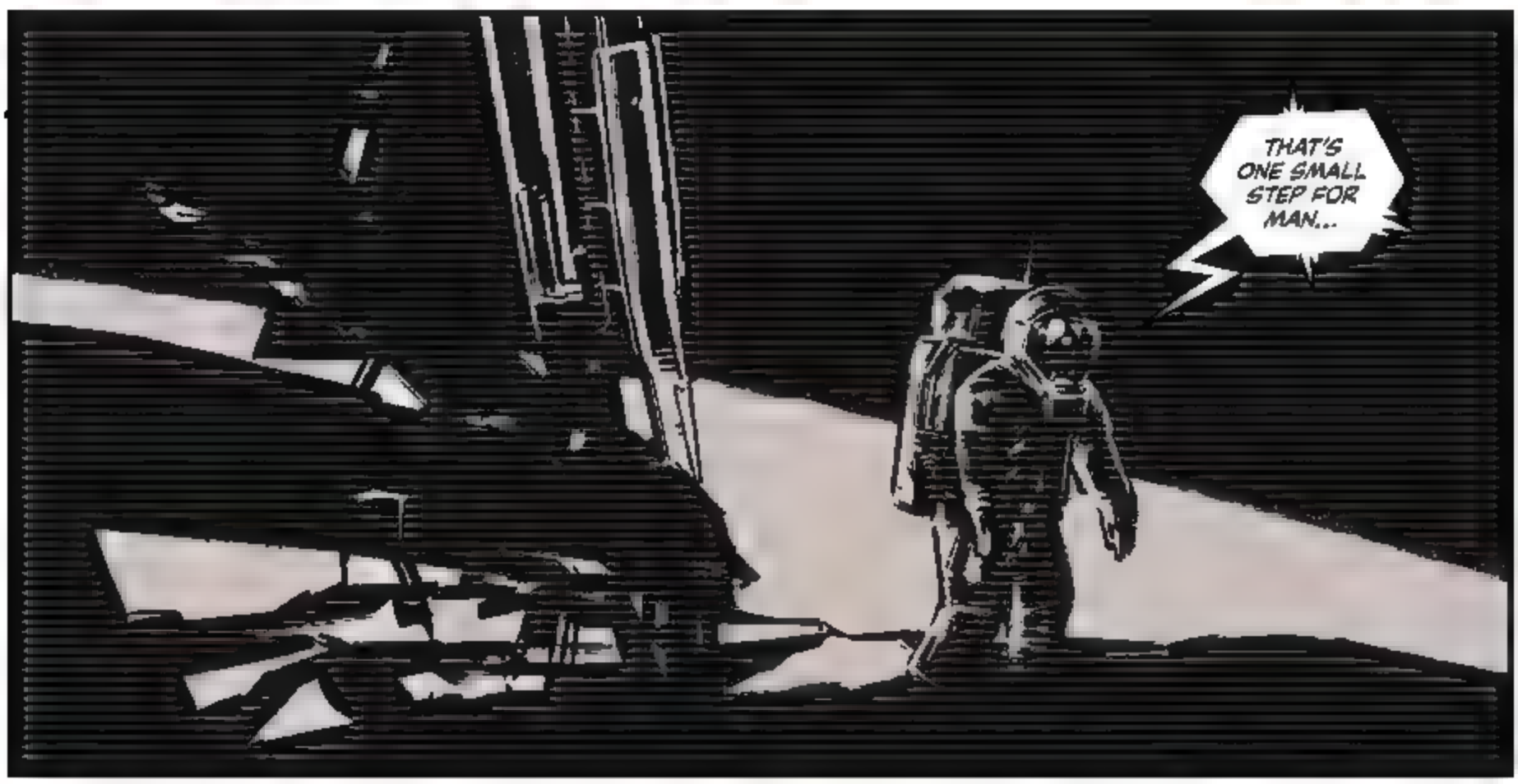
THIS IS ALL BEYOND ME. THE FANTASY OF IT ALL...I THOUGHT I HAD A GRASP ON IT, BUT YOU'VE UNDONE ME.

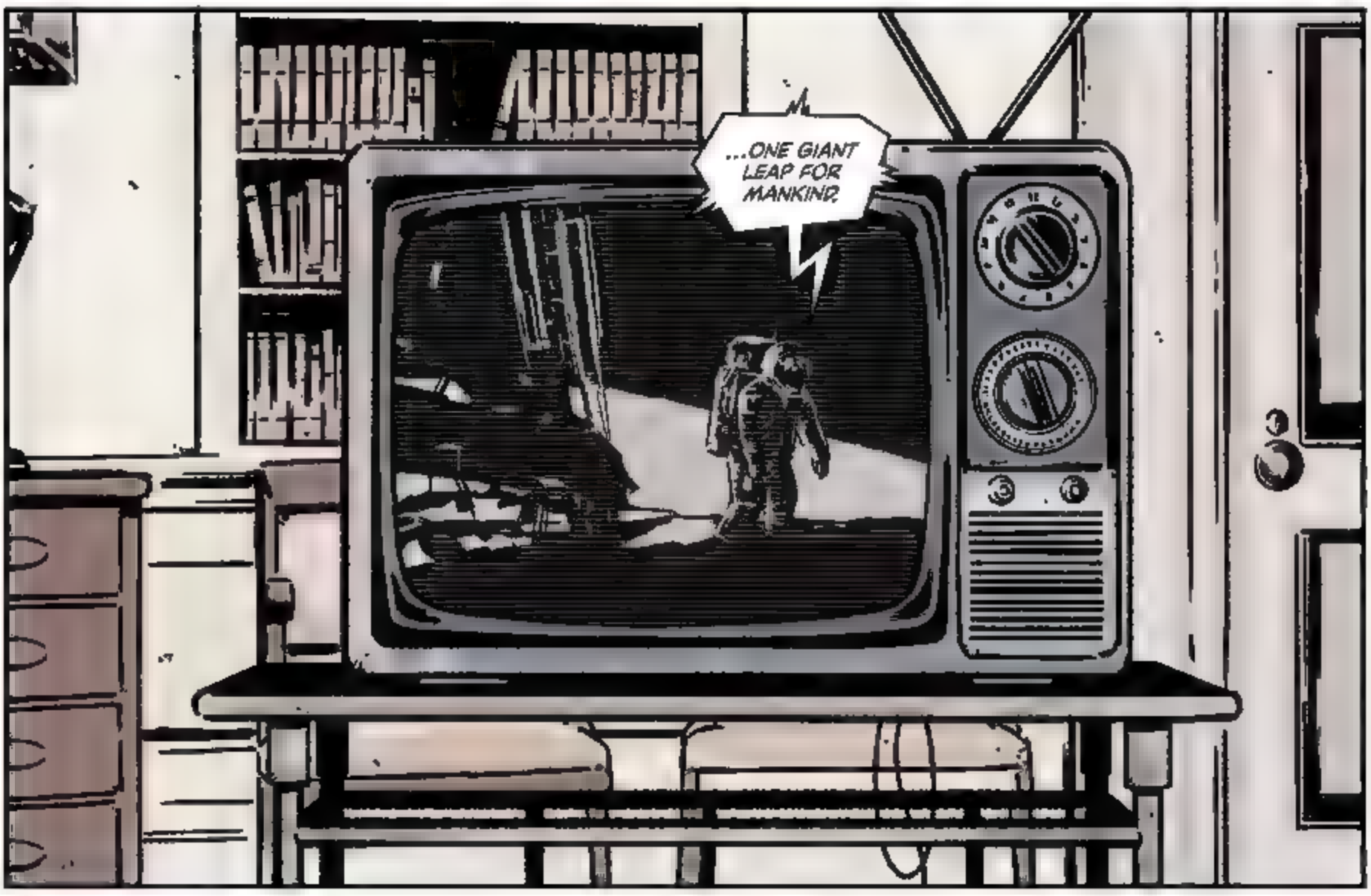
ARE *YOU* REAL?

ARE ANY OF US?

IS ANY OF THIS?

I'M GOING TO STEP OFF THE LM NOW...


THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN...


...ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND.

AND THEY'RE *UP THERE,* YOU THINK?

THEY'RE ACTUALLY ALL UP THERE? ON THE *REAL* GODDAMN *MOON?*

YES, SIR, MR. PRESIDENT. I CALLED THE STUDIO. THERE'S NO RECORD OF OUR HAVING EVER RENTED IT. I HAVE AGENTS OF MY DEPARTMENT MAKING SURE THERE'S NO PAPER TRAIL EITHER.

WE THINK SOMETHING LIKE 650 MILLION PEOPLE ARE WATCHING THIS AROUND THE WORLD RIGHT NOW, AND MORE THAN THAT ARE AWARE THAT IT'S HAPPENING.

THEY BELIEVE THAT IT'S HAPPENING, SO IT *IS.* BELIEF MADE IT REAL.

THIS TRICK OF YOURS...IT COULD HAVE WIDER USES, COULDN'T IT? I'VE BEEN TALKING TO HENRY. WE COULD REWRITE *VIETNAM* IN OUR FAVOR...

HELL, WE COULD REWRITE THE NEXT FUCKING *ELECTION* IN OUR FAVOR. IF WE CONTROL THE SHOW LIKE THIS...

SIR, BOTH OF THOSE...THE LEVELS OF COMPLEXITY ARE VERY DIFFERENT.

WE WERE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WITH ONLY A VERY SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE IN THE KNOW, WHILE GETTING PEOPLE TO BELIEVE SOMETHING THEY *WANTED* TO BELIEVE.

BUT IT'S POSSIBLE.

THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SAYING *HITLER* MANAGED. HE CONTROLLED THE NARRATIVE AND HE CONTROLLED THE WAR.

UNTIL HE LOST *CONTROL* OF THAT NARRATIVE.

YOU KNOW...THEY'LL CREDIT THIS TO HIM. TO KENNEDY.

HE PROMISED HE'D TAKE AMERICA TO THE MOON, AND NOBODY WILL REMEMBER THAT HE WAS SIX YEARS IN THE *GROUND* BEFORE WE *GOT* THERE.

BUT I DON'T HAVE TO TELL *YOU* THAT, DO I, *LEE?*

SIR?

DON'T *PLAY* ME, BOY. I KNEW WHO YOU WERE THE SECOND YOU STEPPED INTO THIS GODDAMN OFFICE THE FIRST TIME.

THE BRAT *STOLE* THE WHITE HOUSE FROM ME BACK IN '60. LOST US FUCKING *CUBA.* HE CARED TOO MUCH ABOUT *CAMELOT.* THE *DREAM* OF IT ALL...

AND HE LOST THE GRIP WE *HAD* ON THIS COUNTRY.

WISH IT WAS *ME* THAT PULLED THE TRIGGER.

I...I DON'T...

YOU DON'T NEED TO SAY ANYTHING TO ME, LEE. I'VE BEEN IN AND AROUND INTELLIGENCE LONG ENOUGH THAT I KNOW WHAT I DON'T ***NEED*** TO KNOW.

BUT I ***DO*** WANT TO HAVE A CHAT ABOUT YOUR BOSS, MR. CAPRA.

WHY WE FIGHT? THAT WAS A HELL OF A THING. AND HE HELPED US CRAFT A GOOD STORY FOR A WHILE. BUT I COULD FEEL HIS ***DISCOMFORT*** WITH ALL OF THIS CRAP.

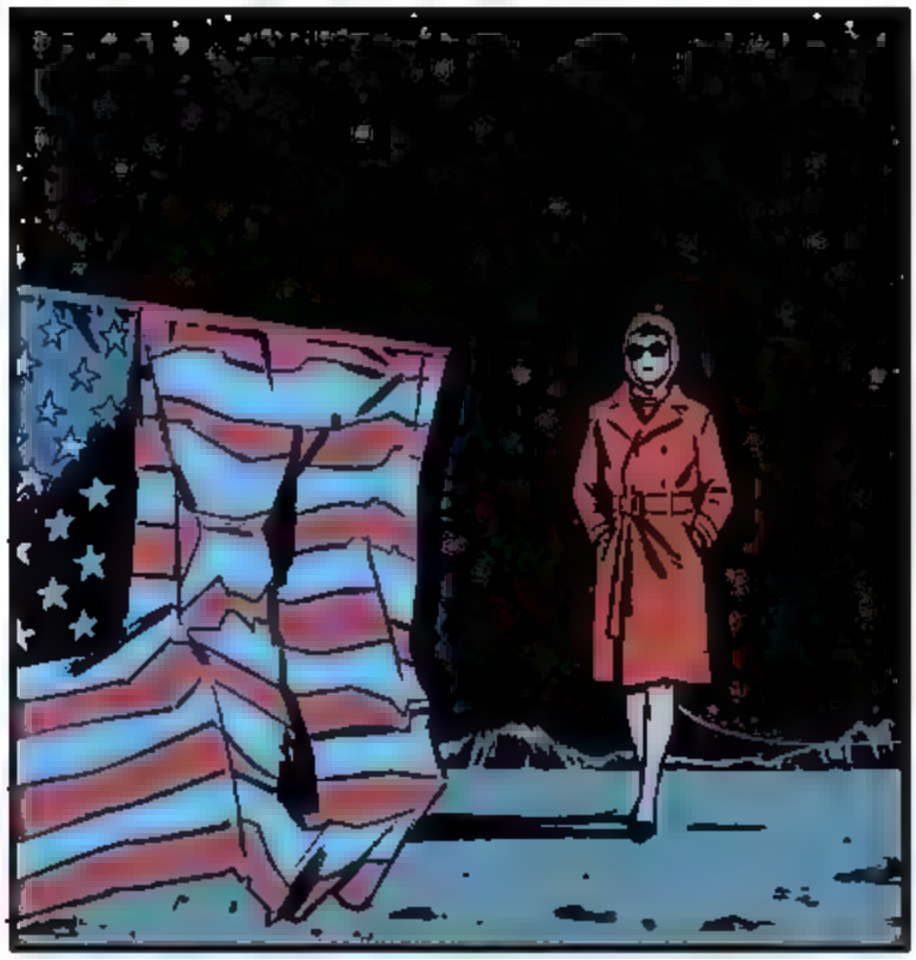
I THINK IT'S TIME AMERICA WAS A LITTLE MORE... ***STRATEGIC*** ABOUT WHAT THE TRUTH IS. AND IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE THE YOUNG BUCK WHO CAN HELP ***GET*** ME THERE.

I'M GOING TO SUGGEST THAT MR. CAPRA ***RETIRE*** COME THE END OF THE YEAR, AND THEN I WANT YOU ***RUNNING*** THE DEPARTMENT. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

I SERVE AT THE PLEASURE OF THE PRESIDENT.

YOU'RE ***GODDAMN RIGHT,*** YOU DO.

YOU'RE GODDAMN RIGHT.



VARIANT COVERS

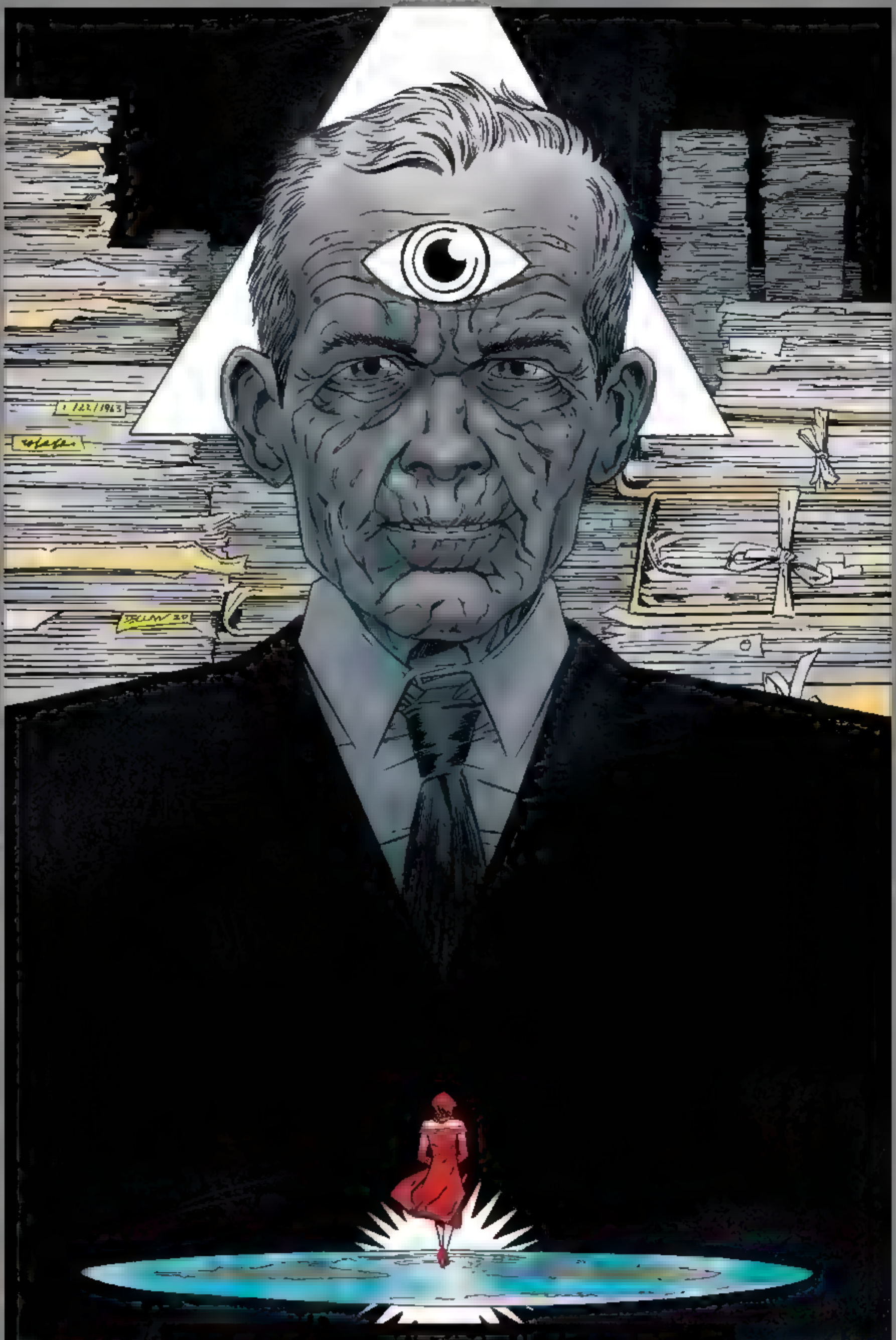
ISSUE 1	James Tynion IV (Proof-of-Concept Variant) Martin Simmonds (Lee Harvey Oswald Secret Variant) Martin Simmonds (Sixth-Printing Variant) Jenny Frison Declan Shalvey InHyuk Lee Mirka Andolfo Werther Dell'edera & Giovanna Niro
ISSUE 2	Christian Ward David Romero Francesco Francavilla Martin Simmonds
ISSUE 3	Andrea Sorrentino Adam Gorham Trevor Henderson
ISSUE 4	Tradd Moore Nick Robles Jeff Lemire
ISSUE 5	DaNi & Tamra Bonvillain Tiffany Turrill Tula Lotay
ISSUE 6	Elsa Charretier
ISSUE 7	Tyler Boss
ISSUE 8	Bill Sienkiewicz Skottie Young
ISSUE 9	Michael Avon Oeming Zoe Thorogood
ISSUE 10	Michael Dialynas Vincenzo Riccardi
ISSUE 11	Trevor Henderson Ethan Young
ISSUE 12	Caspar Wijngaard Aaron Campbell
ISSUE 13	Alvaro Martinez Bueno Maria Llovet
ISSUE 14	John J. Pearson
ISSUE 15	David Romero
ISSUE 16	Alison Sampson
ISSUE 17	Jorge Fornes

ISSUE 1 | James Tynion IV (Proof-of-Concept Variant)

ISSUE 1 | Martin Simmonds (Lee Harvey Oswald Secret Variant)

ISSUE 1 | Martin Simmonds (Sixth-Printing Variant)

ISSUE 1 VARIANT | Jenny Frison



ISSUE 1 VARIANT | Declan Shalvey

ISSUE 1 VARIANT | InHyuk Lee

ISSUE 1 VARIANT | Mirka Andolfo

JAMES TYNION IV

MARTIN SIMMONDS

ADITYA BIDIKAR

Nº 1

the DEPARTMENT of TRUTH

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ISSUE 2 VARIANT | Christian Ward

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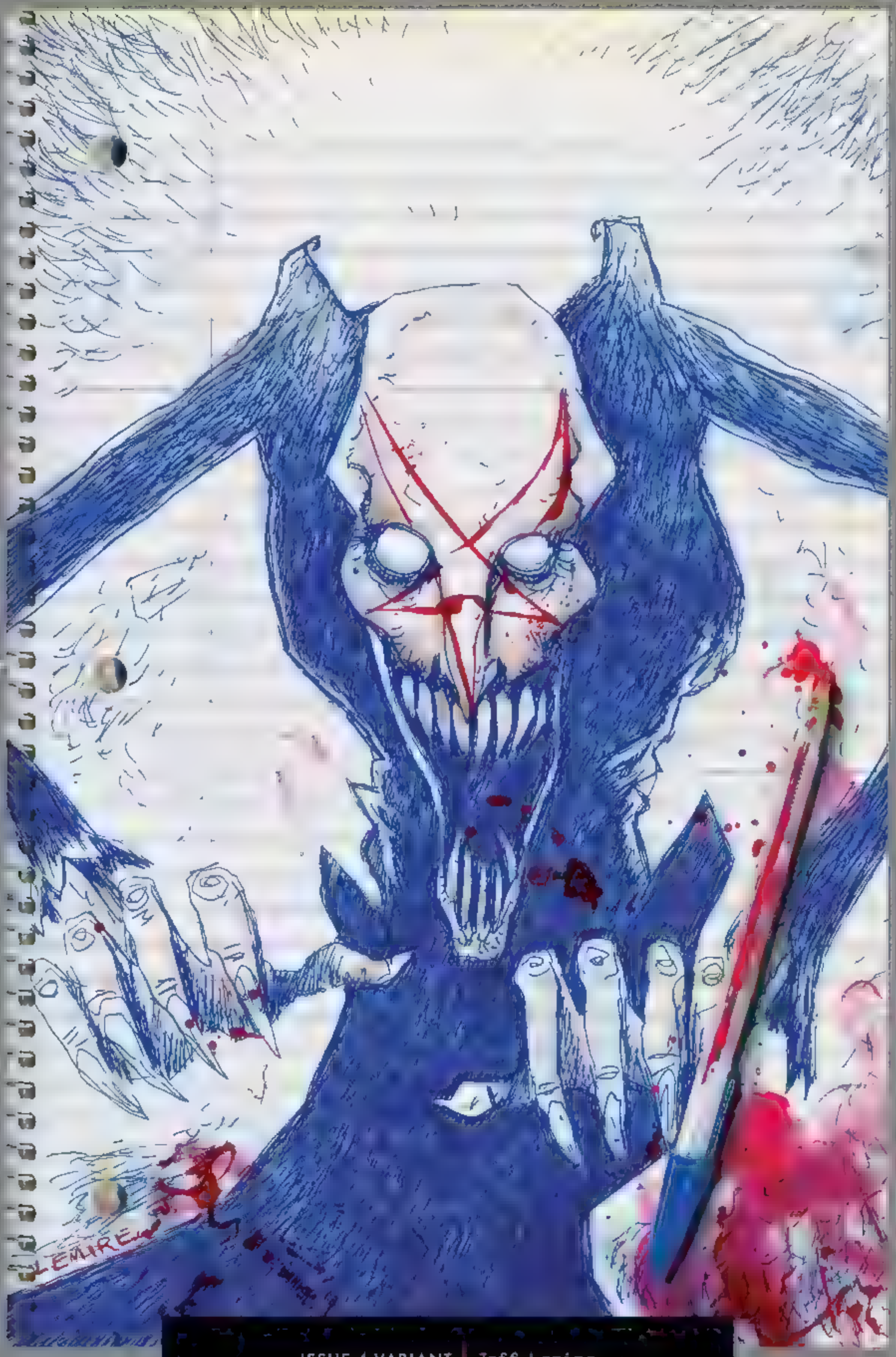
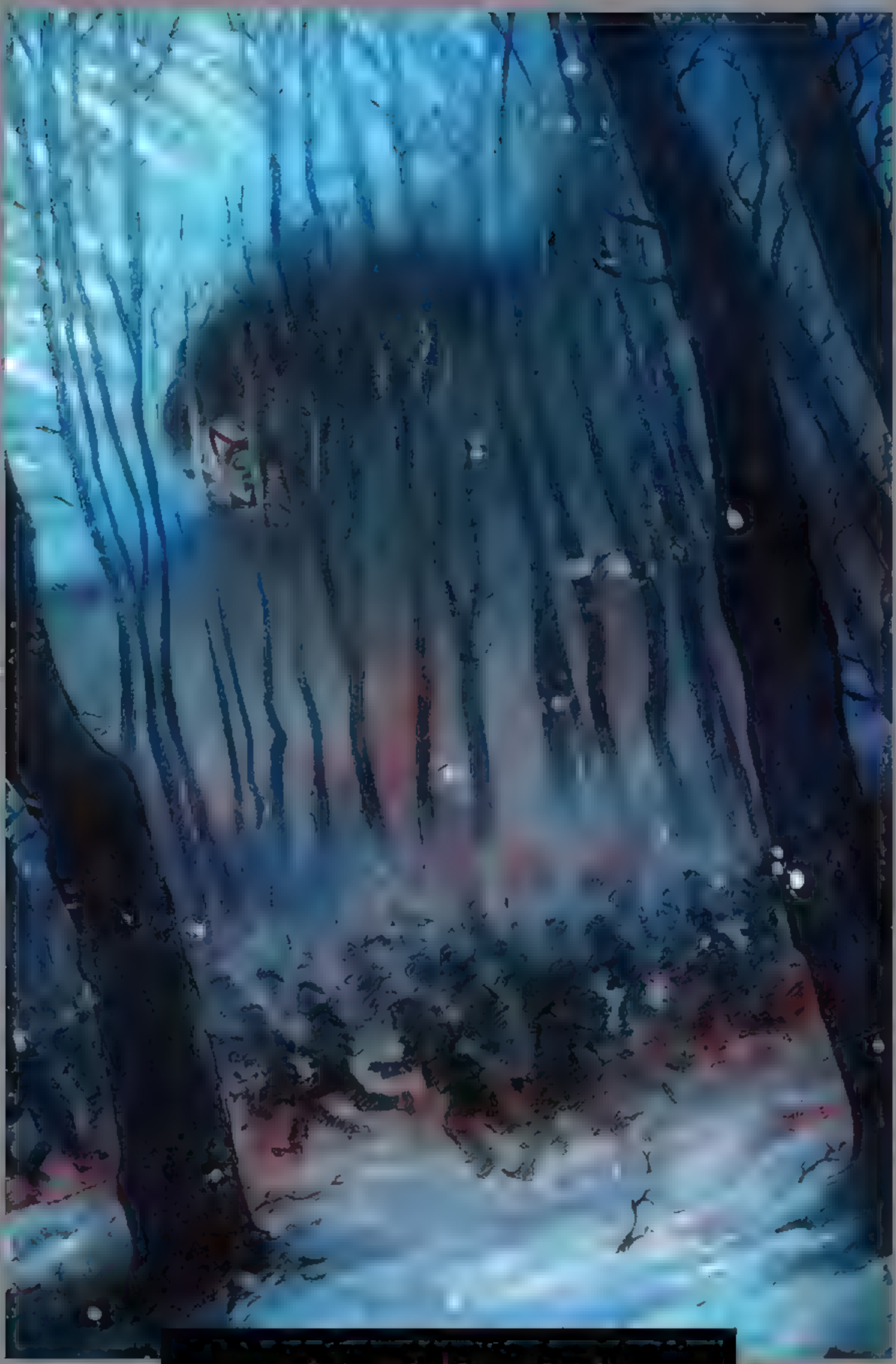


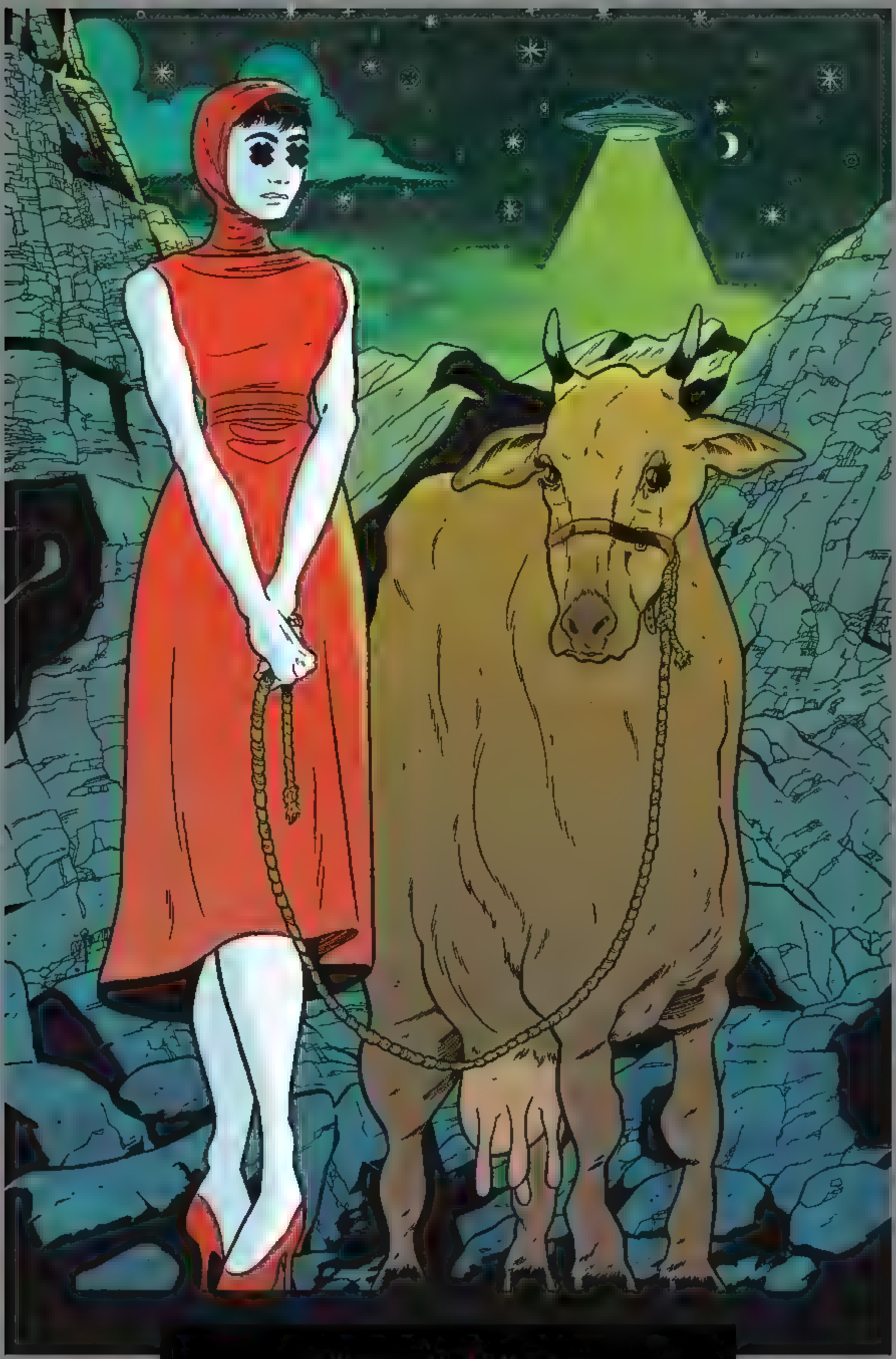
ISSUE 4 VARIANT | Jeff Lemire

ISSUE 5 VARIANT | DaNi & Tamra Bonvillain

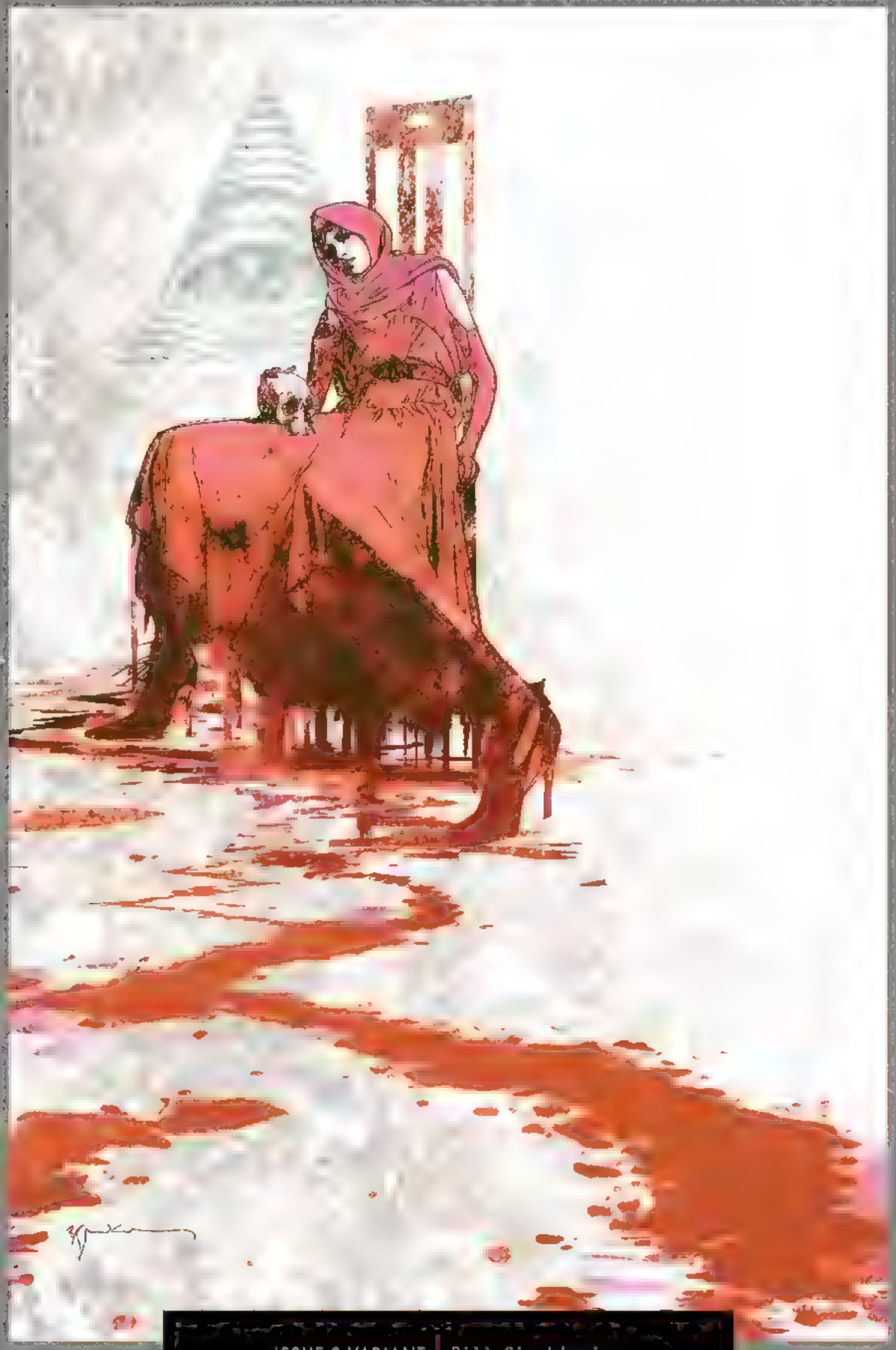

ISSUE 5 VARIANT | Tiffany Turrill

ISSUE 5 VARIANT | Tula Lotay

ISSUE 8 VARIANT | Elsa Charretier



ISSUE 7 VARIANT | Tyler Boss



ISSUE 8 VARIANT | Bill Sienkiewicz

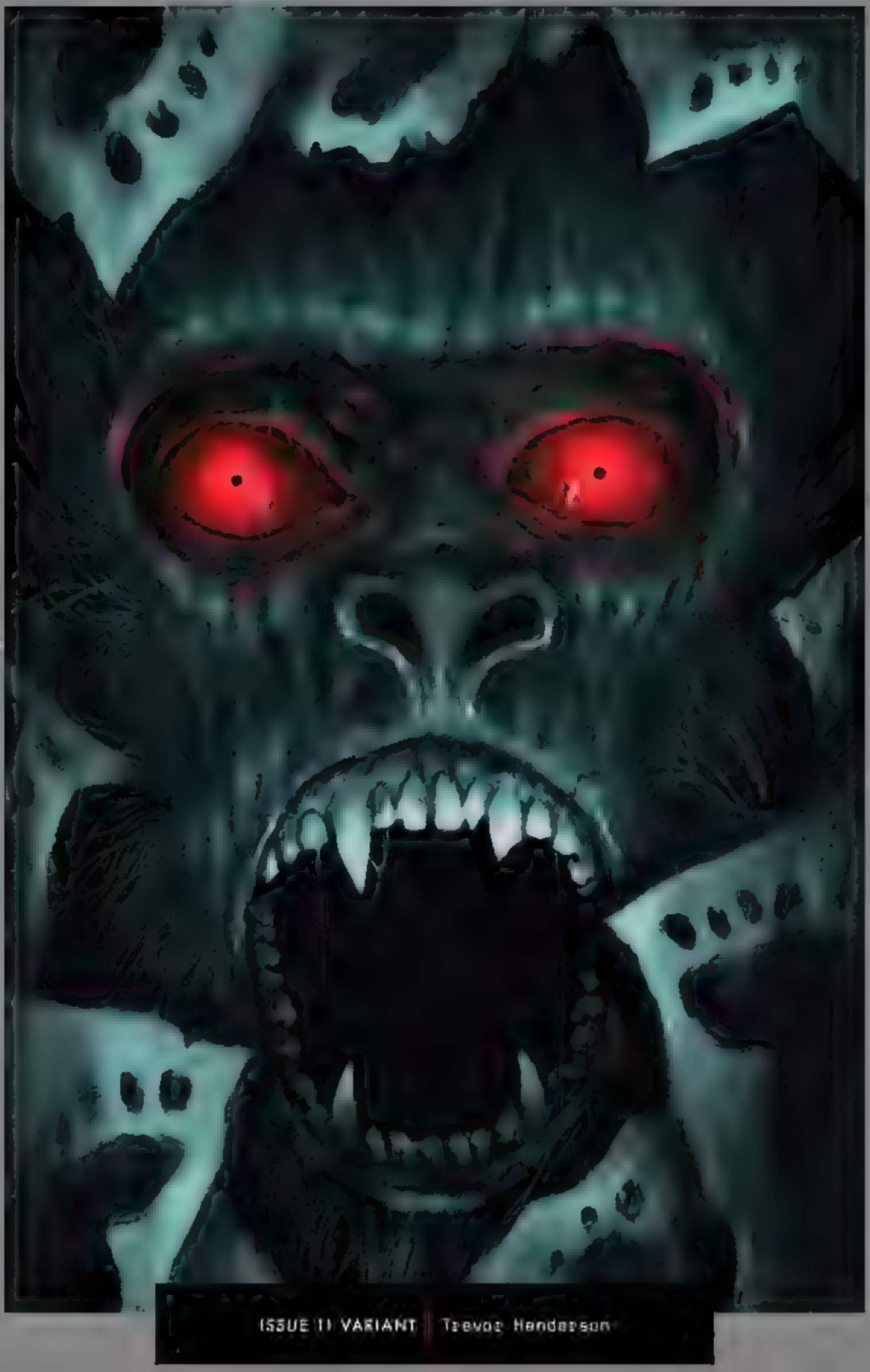
ISSUE 8 VARIANT | Skottie Young

ISSUE 9 VARIANT | Michael Avon Oeming

ISSUE 9 VARIANT | Zoe Thorogood

ISSUE 10 VARIANT | Michael Dialynas

ISSUE 10 VARIANT | Vincenzo Riccardi



ISSUE 11 VARIANT | Trevor Henderson

ISSUE 11 VARIANT | Ethan Young

ISSUE 12 VARIANT | Casper Wijngaard

ISSUE 12 VARIANT | Aaron Campbell

ISSUE 13 VARIANT | Alvaro Martinez Bueno

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ISSUE 15 VARIANT | David Romero

TYNION • SAMPSON • BELLAIRE • BIDIKAR

ISSUE 16 VARIANT | Alison Sampson

ISSUE 17 VARIANT | Jorge Fornes

DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH
A SERIES CONCEPT BY JAMES TYNION IV
FOR [redacted] AND [redacted] | JUNE 2017

We start with an FBI Agent, put on assignment for another US intelligence agency (He assumes the CIA). He gets the sense that the mission is an audition of sorts, and he is eager.

He's always wanted to be one of the people in the know. The sort of person who learns the things that average Americans only guess about.

The mission sends him undercover, infiltrating a group of Evangelical Christian Kansas billionaires. They claim to have discovered definitive proof that the world is flat. He sees

videos of men who claim to have participated in NASA's cover up program. His assumption is that he's there to discover some kind of financial crime. That these people are illegally using money to fund their "research" into conspiracy theories. But then the billionaires have him flown out to a private-owned aircraft carrier in the Pacific. They bring him on a helicopter, and tell him that seeing is believing.

And that is when he sees, with his own eyes, the literal edge of the world. Water falling off a sheer cliff, monumental in size, falling down into an abyss. The billionaires grin, enraptured

by their discovery. The agent can barely process what he's seeing. He returns to Washington, and is taken to a building he's never noticed before. He meets the Director of the mysterious department for which he's been working, a 78-year old man, gruff and serious. He wants the full report. The honest truth of what he saw. The agent knows he'll sound insane, but he delivers the report. The Director smiles as he talks. He leads the agent down into one of the basements of the building, and into a room. The Agent thinks he's going to be committed... But then he's taken into a room with a glass containment cell in the center. In the cell is the Alien, taken from Roswell in 1954. Psychically, it shows the Agent how it arrived on earth. Which is, of course a spherical planet.

The Agent rushes out of the room, vomiting. He doesn't understand. The Director explains. Every conspiracy theory is true. The line that the winners write the history books is only half of the story. The more people believe something, the more true it becomes. The belief rewrites reality. The United States Department of Truth has spent the last century making sure that the wrong truths don't take hold, and that the world stays stable. Covert above presidential clearance. The trouble is, in the last few years, they've started to lose. For some key reason in this guy's background, they see him as an asset. The director asks if this man is ready to see the real world, hidden behind everything else....

The 78-year old director ends by introducing himself. His name is Lee Harvey Oswald.

WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH.

JAMES TYNION IV

is an Eisner Award-winning, *New York Times*-bestselling writer and publisher of comic books. He is best known for co-creating hit horror comics series like *SOMETHING IS KILLING THE CHILDREN* and *THE NICE HOUSE ON THE LAKE*. He is also the writer of Young Adult adventure series, like the 2022 GLAAD Media Award-nominated *WYND*, and the 2017 GLAAD Media Award-winning *THE WOODS*. He spent ten years writing various Batman titles at DC Comics, where he co-created characters like Punchline and Ghost-Maker. He lives and works in Brooklyn with his weird old dog.

MARTIN SIMMONDS

is a comic artist, and co-creator of *DYING IS EASY* (with Joe Hill) for IDW, *PUNKS NOT DEAD* (with David Barnett) for Black Crown/IDW, and *FRIENDO* (with Alex Paknadel) for Vault Comics. Martin is also a cover artist, with his work appearing on titles from Marvel, DC, Image, BOOM!, Vault, and IDW.

ADITYA BIDIKAR

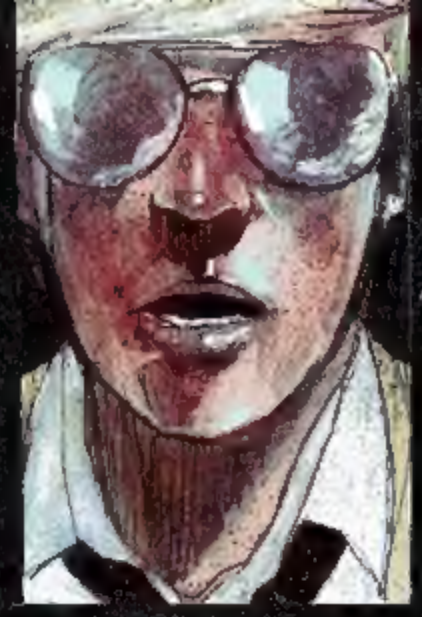
is an award-winning letterer for comics like *HOME SICK PILOTS*, *DETECTIVE COMICS*, *SWAMP THING*, *THE ALL-NIGHTER*, and many more. He is also occasionally a writer and an editor. He lives in India surrounded by comics.

DYLAN TODD

is an art director, graphic designer, and occasional writer. He lives in a house in the desert, among the lizards and spiders. Sometimes the wind blows.

STEVE FOXE

is the Eisner and Ringo Award-nominated author of many, many children's books... and a good number of comics children absolutely should not read. He is also the co-creator, alongside James Tynion IV, of *RAZORBLADES: THE HORROR MAGAZINE*. He lives somewhere cold and wild with his partner and dog.



COLE TURNER has studied conspiracy theories all his life, but he isn't prepared for what happens when he discovers that all of them are true: the JFK Assassination, Flat Earth Theory, Bigfoot, Mothman, and so much worse.

One organization has been covering them up for generations, controlling the narrative for what they claim is the greater good.

What is the deep, dark secret behind **THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH**—and will learning it destroy Cole's life from the inside out?

Eisner Award-winning writer **James Tynion IV** (*Something is Killing the Children, The Nice House on the Lake*), celebrated artist **Martin Simmonds** (*Dying is Easy*), and an array of acclaimed guest artists present a mind-bending examination of truth versus fiction...and who has the power to determine which is which.

COLLECTS **THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH #1-17**

"A wonderfully dizzy mixture of *Men in Black*, John Carpenter, Stephen King, *The Matrix*, and 1970s conspiracy thrillers."
—FORBES

"A story for our zeitgeist. Simmonds' art invokes Bill Sienkiewicz."
—ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"A new conspiracy thriller comic that should appeal to anyone with a fondness for *The X-Files*." **—IGN**

"Hickmanian conspiracy games, Burroughsian crime, Sienkiewiczian style. The Truth: you want it."
—KIERON GILLEN
(DIE, THE WICKED + THE DIVINE)

"Genuinely one of the best comics you'll read this year. Do not miss it."
—SCOTT SNYDER
(BATMAN, AMERICAN VAMPIRE)

"The hype on this is real."
—BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS
(ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN, POWERS)

"A mind-blowing exploration of conspiracy theory from a team that obviously has a deep understanding and love for the subject. It's the most fun I've had reading a comic book in years."
—MARCUS PARKS
(LAST PODCAST ON THE LEFT, SOUL PLUMBER)

Nominated for five Eisner Awards, including **BEST CONTINUING SERIES.**

2022 Harvey Award nominee for **BOOK OF THE YEAR**

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